JESUS
THE
Model of Religious
O
ADVENT TO PENTECOST

BRO. John McKenzie, C. S. C.

JESUS
THE MODEL OF RELIGIOUS

(Meditations for every day of the year)

BY

A RELIGIOUS OF THE CONGREGATION
OF ST. CHARLES BORROMEO

Translated by a
SISTER OF NOTRE DAME (CLEVELAND, OHIO)

VOLUME I
From Advent to Pentecost

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✠ JOSEPH SCHREMBS, D.D.
Bishop of Cleveland

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PREFACE

The Meditations on "Jesus, the Model of Religious," translated from the German of a Religious of the Congregation of St. Charles Borromeo, by a Sister of Notre Dame, are admirable both for accuracy of doctrine and method of presentation. Their well balanced appeal to the mind and the heart makes the reader feel that he may not only admire the exalted principles of the higher life in others but make them the rule of his own life.

It is rare to find a book of meditations adapted to the needs of all, but the present work comes nearer than any we have seen in its universal appeal. While treating the usual subjects of mental prayer, the author presents them with a simplicity and directness that renders them personal to each one. These outlines will make meditation easier for beginners and offer many helpful suggestions to the experienced, while they will give all a better understanding of the religious life and a more ardent love of God and the saints.

(Signed) ✠ JOSEPH SCHREMBS.

BISHOP'S HOUSE,
1007 Superior Ave.,
Cleveland, Ohio.
June 30, 1923.

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The translator further acknowledges indebtedness to the following, who have likewise contributed materially to the worth of the work by supplying meditations which, though not in the original, it has seemed advisable to include: the Rt. Rev. Monsignor D. I. Lanslots, O.S.B., Belmont Abbey, Belmont, N. C., meditation feast St. Benedict, March 21st; the Rev. John Cavanaugh, C.S.C., D.D., LL.D., University of Notre Dame, meditation feast St. Brigid, February 1st; the Rev. Thomas M. Schwertner, O.P., Editor Rosary Magazine, New York City, meditations: feast St. Thomas Aquinas, March 7th; feast St. Dominic, August 4th; feast St. Rose of Lima, August 30th; revised meditation feast of the Holy Rosary,

October 7th; the Rev. Thomas G. Ring, Ph.D., Catholic University, Washington, D. C., feast St. Patrick, March 17th; the Rev. Joseph Husslein, S.J., Associate Editor of "America," New York City, feast Little Flower, October 3d; the Rev. Leopold Kitt, O.F.M., Cleveland, Ohio, meditation feast St. Anthony, June 13th; the Rev. Matthew J. Corcoran, D.D., O.S.A., St. Rita's Rectory, Philadelphia, Pa., meditation feast St. Rita, May 22nd. We ourselves have supplied meditations for the feast of St. Alphonsus, August 2nd, and for the Feast of Blessed Julie Billiart, May 13th, Foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame.

NOTRE DAME CONVENT,
Cleveland, Ohio.
FEAST OF ST. CHARLES,
November 4, 1924.

THIRD EDITION

For three new meditations, which enrich the present edition, grateful acknowledgments are made to the Very Rev. James W. Donahue, C.S.C., Superior General of the Congregation of Holy Cross, Notre Dame, Indiana, meditation feast the Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Last Sunday of October; the Rev. Thomas à K. Reilly, O.P., S.S.Prol., Rosary College, River Forest, Illinois, meditation feast St. Catherine of Siena, April 30th; Sister M. Christina, O.S.U., Mt. St. Joseph Ursuline Motherhouse, St. Joseph, Kentucky, meditation feast St. Angela Merici, May 31st.

NOTRE DAME CONVENT,
Cleveland, Ohio.
THE PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY,
November 21, 1927.

PRAYER BEFORE MEDITATION

RECALL THE PRESENCE OF GOD; ADORE HIM

O my God, on account of my many sins and imperfections, I am not worthy to appear before Thee; nevertheless, although but dust and ashes, I dare speak to Thee, Who art infinitely good, and rich in mercy. I will call upon Thy holy Name; I will ponder upon Thy divine commandments, to make me alert and zealous to fulfill them faithfully and punctually. O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, enlighten mine understanding, strengthen my will, that I may do and suffer all things in imitation of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Grant, O God, that all my thoughts, intentions, and acts during this meditation, may be directed solely to the service and praise of Thy Divine Majesty. Amen.

PRAYER AFTER MEDITATION

O God, we thank Thee for having suffered us to remain so long in Thy presence, despite our unworthiness and nothingness. We thank Thee for all good thoughts with which Thou hast inspired us, and humbly implore forgiveness for all distractions and lack of devotion of which we have been culpable during this meditation. Holy Mary, our dear Mother, dear Guradian Angel, holy Patrons, all ye Saints, pray for us, that we may accomplish our resolutions. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Our Father. Hail Mary.

* * * * *

Prayers to be said—as indicated—after the respective Meditations

O JESUS, LIVING IN MARY

O Jesus, living in Mary! come and live in Thy servants, in the spirit of Thy holiness, in the fullness of Thy might, in the truth of Thy virtues, in the perfection of Thy ways, in the communion of Thy mysteries; subdue every hostile power, in Thy spirit for the glory of the Father. Amen.

(Indulgence of 300 days, once a day.—Pius IX, Oct. 14, 1859.)

TAKE, O LORD

Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my whole will. Thou hast given me all that I am and all that I possess; I surrender it all to Thee that Thou mayest dispose of it according to Thy Will. Give me only Thy love and Thy grace; with these I will be rich enough, and will have no more to desire.

(Indulgence of 300 days, once a day.—Pope Leo XIII, May 26, 1883.)

SOUL OF CHRIST

Soul of Christ, be my sanctification.
Body of Christ, be my salvation.
Blood of Christ, fill all my veins.
Water of Christ's side, wash out my stains.

Passion of Christ, my comfort be.
O good Jesu, listen to me.
In Thy wounds I fain would hide,
Ne'er to be parted from Thy side.
Guard me should the foe assail me.
Call me when my life shall fail me.
Bid me come to Thee above,
With Thy saints to sing Thy love.
Word without end. Amen.

(300 days; 7 years, if said after Communion; plenary, once a month.—Pius IX, Jan. 9, 1854.)

OPEN TO ME THY HEART, O JESUS

Open to me Thy Heart, O Jesus, for there is the place of my repose; I will dwell therein all the days of my life, and breathe forth my last sigh in the hour of death. Oh, that I could incessantly offer my heart with this Divine Heart! May my heart be so intimately united with Thine, that I can say with the Spouse in the Canticle: "I sleep, but my heart watcheth" (Cant. 5, 2). Lord, I commend my soul into Thy hands. Never forsake me, O Mother of Mercy; assist me during mine earthly pilgrimage, and keep my soul in the hour of death. Amen.

O MOST HOLY AND AFFLICTED VIRGIN

O most holy and afflicted Virgin! Queen of martyrs! thou who didst stand beneath the cross, witnessing the agony of thy expiring Son—through the unceasing sufferings of thy life of sorrow, and the bliss which now more than amply repays thee for thy past trials, look down with a mother's tenderness and pity on me, who kneel before

thee to venerate thy dolors, and place my requests, with filial confidence, in the sanctuary of thy wounded heart; present them, I beseech thee, on my behalf, to Jesus Christ, through the merits of His own most sacred death and passion, together with thy sufferings at the foot of the cross, and through the united efficacy of both, obtain the grant of my present petition. To whom shall I recur in my wants and miseries if not to thee, O Mother of mercy, who, having so deeply drunk of the chalice of thy Son, canst compassionate the woes of those who still sigh in the land of exile? Sancta Maria, Mater Dolorosa, ora pro me!

JESUS, MY LORD, MY KING

Jesus, my Lord, my King, do Thou take complete possession of my heart, of my soul, of my whole being, that I may love Thee and serve Thee faithfully. Grant me the gift of perseverance in Thy grace. Strengthen me, that, in union with Thee, I may do perfectly the heavenly Father's Will. Let me never more be separated from Thee by sin. I love Thee above all things and with my whole heart. "Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever."

Increase my faith, strengthen my hope, kindle Thy love within me, that I may die to self and live but for Thee. All for the greater glory of God!

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JESUS, THE MODEL OF RELIGIOUS

MEDITATION FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

PREPARATION FOR THE ADVENT OF OUR DIVINE SAVIOUR

"Brethren, knowing that it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep, Let us therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light" (Rom. 13, 11-12).

First Prelude: Hear the words of the Apostle of the Gentiles, which Holy Mother Church addresses to all her children today. Her tender admonitions should excite you to new fervor.

Second Prelude: O Divine Saviour, teach us how to prepare for Thy advent, that we may participate in Thy graces to the fullest extent.

First Point

WE SHOULD RISE FROM SLEEP TO A NEW LIFE

During the holy season of Advent the Church continually exhorts us with the words of Holy Writ: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord" (Matt. 3, 3). Today the Apostle of the Gentiles makes clear to us how we are to begin this preparation, "Knowing," as we read in the epistle of today, "that it is now the hour to rise from sleep" (Rom. 12, 11), glowing with the desire to enkindle

in the hearts of all the faithful the fire of love that consumed him, the Apostle admonishes them to remove all obstacles to fervor and zeal, such as indifference and idleness. Do we, perhaps, bear these marks of spiritual lethargy? Have we, perhaps, spent our days in indifference, made little effort to conquer sloth in our spiritual exercises, or nourished our natural inclinations, unmindful of the voice of grace? How important and absolutely necessary should then be our rising from such a sleep! How precious is our immortal soul, endowed by God's infinite goodness with sanctifying grace! Enriched with God's grace our souls should be exceedingly fruitful in works pleasing to Him. Woe to us, if, in spite of all the graces daily imparted to us, our heart yields only thorns and thistles!

"Arise," says the Lord to the Spouse in the Canticle, "Make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one and come" (2-10). What spring is in the order of nature, the season of Advent is in the ecclesiastical year. Consequently, everywhere new life is germinating in the Church, new growth in virtue is becoming manifest in thousands of hearts and spring enters with its rejuvenating, invigorating activity, pushing forth the blossoms of virtue. Oh, let us not suffer this beautiful spring-time of the ecclesiastical year to pass unheeded!

Second Point

"CAST OFF THE WORKS OF DARKNESS AND PUT YE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST"

The Apostle exhorts us to put off the old man according to the image of Adam, to deny perverted nature more and more, and to crucify her lusts. Our Divine Saviour teaches us how to do this; there is only one way to Him, with the assistance of His grace, namely, the way on which

He came to us. He abased Himself, to become obedient under the guise of a servant as Son of Man, obedient even unto the death of the cross. He exhorts us: "If any man will follow Me let him deny himself" (Luke 9, 23). Following His invitation and example, let us walk in His light, that the fire of the love of His Divine Heart may stream into our own and rouse us to fervor. Grace will impel us to utilize diligently every opportunity to prepare our hearts for the coming of the Saviour. Now Jesus knocks at the door of our hearts gently, then again, insistently. Though He desires to take possession of every heart, the demands He makes of individual souls are vastly different. Of one He requires renunciation of self-love, pride, and selfishness; of another, the combat of impatience and impetuosity. Now He admonishes us to overcome idleness and tepidity, and to be more fervent in our spiritual exercises; again, He impels us to practice true love for our neighbor. We must keep ourselves in readiness if we would receive the special graces and gifts that Jesus so gladly imparts at His coming.

Has the Saviour not for a long time sought admittance to our hearts? Will we not, finally, resolve to make the sacrifice that He asks of us?

Affections: Come, Lord Jesus, come into our hearts, we cry to Thee with Holy Church, with all who love Thy advent. By watching and praying, we will prepare the way for Thee, that sleep may not hold us captive, and Thou pass us by. Extricate our souls from darkness, heal our wounds and weaknesses, replenish us with Thy divine love, that Thou mayest enter our hearts and take up therein Thy lasting abode. We will receive Thee with holy ardor and Thou wilt give us grace to become children of God.

Resolution: During the holy season of Advent, we will practice those mortifications which we need most to make our hearts receptive for the graces of the Saviour.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

Prayer: Jesus, my Lord, my King . . .

MEDITATION FOR MONDAY

THE INESTIMABLE BENEFIT OF THE INCARNATION

"God Himself will come and will save you" (Is. 35, 4).

First Prelude: Imagine the grief of our first parents when they were doomed after the fall to leave the beautiful garden of Eden, and to seek an abode in this vale of tears.

Second Prelude: O my God, grant us grace to realize the necessity of penance, that by persevering practice of it we may render ourselves worthy of the inestimable graces our Blessed Saviour merited for us in the Incarnation.

First Point

UNHAPPINESS OF MAN AFTER THE FALL

By transgressing the divine command, our first parents lost sanctifying grace and, with it, the dignity of sonship of God. They fell victims of a spiritual death, became servants of sin and Satan, who looked with infernal pleasure upon their misfortune—his work—and exercised his dominion with tyrannical malice. True, God in His infinite mercy promised the Messiah to our first parents in paradise, but only through protracted penance could they regain grace and find salvation.

We, poor, sinful children of Eve likewise sigh under the absolute necessity of penance, and can attain salvation only by the continuous mortification of corrupt nature. We must mortify our senses, lest they cause us to fall; we must curb our imagination, which is so full of pernicious representations, we must restrain our evil inclinations, which crave what God forbids. Every act of mortification is a victory which puts the devil to shame and imparts new grace for further struggle. Every act of mortification is a source of joy to the Heart of God, and of merit and consolation for us. The more we, as religious, exercise ourselves in mortification and self-denial, the happier we become; the more we seek sacrifices, the more fully we find peace of heart, and Christ's promise confirmed: "My yoke is sweet and My burden light" (Matt. 11, 30).

What is my spirit of immolation? Does my life bear testimony to the truth of this consoling promise of our Blessed Lord?

Second Point

BENEFITS OF THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD

Although a great portion of the merits of Jesus Christ was applied in advance to the faithful of the Old Law, in order that they could find salvation and grace, nevertheless, in the New Testament we receive these graces in far more generous measure. Divine Goodness would not leave us without indemnity for the loss of paradise, and therefore, founded a new paradise, as it were, through the institution of the Church with her inexhaustible treasures of grace. By means of the holy sacraments, we become children of God, members of Jesus Christ and temples of the Holy Ghost, Who dwells with us. Jesus

in the Sacrament of His Love is the Tree of Life; whosoever eats of this Tree shall not die, according to the words of our Lord Himself, but shall live and become like to God. Holy Communion, especially, qualifies us for the sacrifices of self-denial and the exercise of charity, which are inseparable from genuine sanctity. How true is it not, O my God, that Thy holy Incarnation secures for us the most glorious goods and advantages, the contemplation of which causes Holy Mother Church to exclaim: "O happy fault, which brought us such a Redeemer!"

Let us deem ourselves fortunate to be in the possession of those things for which the prophets and patriarchs so ardently longed. How much more than they should we rivet all our thoughts upon the Redeemer and devote our whole life to Him! How great were our ingratitude should we fail to risk all, to participate in the abundant merits of Jesus Christ by our fidelity in the use of the means of grace!

Affections: O infinitely loving God, from all eternity Thou hast foreseen the ingratitude of man, and nevertheless Thou didst endow him with such extraordinary gifts. With infinite mercy, Thou didst will that where sin had reigned, grace should be more abundant. Grant that we may faithfully utilize the means of grace which Thou hast left to Thy Church as fruit of Thy redemption. With the aid of Thy grace, O good Jesus, may we praise and thank Thee, and glorify Thee every moment of our lives. Help us especially according to Thy merciful designs, to sanctify this time of grace by fervent prayer and works of penance, that at Thy advent Thou mayest find a well-prepared abode in our hearts. To thee, most gracious Virgin do we turn, to thee do we

cry, poor banished children of Eve in this vale of tears. Turn thy merciful eyes upon us, and as thou once gavest us the Saviour, so now be the mediatrix of His graces. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Resolution: We will strive to prepare our hearts for the reception of grace by the zealous practice of mortification.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Take courage and fear not: God Himself will come and will save you."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR TUESDAY

THE WONDERFUL WISDOM OF GOD IN THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION

"How great are Thy works, O Lord? Thou hast made all things in wisdom: the earth is filled with Thy riches" (Ps. 103, 24).

First Prelude: Call to mind how God in His infinite goodness promised a Redeemer to man after his fall.

Second Prelude: Give us grace, O Divine Saviour, to achieve a glorious victory over the Evil One and corrupt nature by fidelity in Thy service.

First Point

THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD WAS THE MOST BECOMING MEANS OF REDEMPTION

The Holy Fathers say that although God could have effected our redemption without the Incarnation in this mystery He manifested pre-eminently the depth of His Divine Wisdom. Through the Incarnation God not only

liberated us from the power of Satan, but turned even his best laid plans for our destruction to our advantage. The Redeemer would lead us to true salvation by the sure means of faith, hope and charity. By His holy life, He would be our Leader and would Himself descend to the profoundest depths of humiliation in order to heal us from the infirmity of pride. By the grace of God and our faithful cooperation, we, too, though at the price of a severe struggle, can achieve a most glorious victory over our corrupt nature and in doing so, honor God the more. How is God even now glorified by the countless hosts of martyrs, confessors and virgins, who suffer for love of Him, and in heroic renunciation of self tread the world under foot. Through the merits of the Redeemer, God offers us superabundant means of salvation.

Let us, therefore, take courage, and follow our Divine Saviour trustingly in His poverty and humiliation, in His abasement and His sufferings, on the way the saints have walked and through which they entered triumphantly into eternal glory.

Do I look upon the trials and hardships of this life, as means not of regaining paradise, but, according to the Apostle, of gaining an eternal, all surpassing glory? Does this thought encourage me in the struggle against Satan, who stakes all to rob me of my crown or, at least, of a portion of the merit that I can so easily acquire in the religious state?

Second Point

THROUGH THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD MAN ACHIEVED THE VICTORY OVER SATAN

As God's creature, man is destined to be His servant. To put to shame the malice of the devil and to free man-

kind from his thralldom was therefore an act infinitely worthy of the omnipotent God. God announced this resolve to the serpent in paradise with the words: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head" (I Mos. 3, 15). This prophecy had reference, in the first place, to the Blessed Virgin and her Divine Son; but it found its fulfillment even in Adam and Eve, who by a devout, penitential life crushed the serpent's head. They achieved indeed a splendid victory over the devil, and triumph in heavenly bliss over the common enemy of God and man.

To such a triumph, the lot of countless saints, we, too, are called. We, too, must crush the serpent's head. We do it when we combat temptations, shun sin and practice the virtues of our holy state. The evil spirit dreads nothing more than the good works of devout souls, such as watching, praying, fasting, the works of voluntary poverty, of obedience, of humility and charity, and especially the burning love for Him Who, on the Tree of the Cross, triumphed most gloriously over Satan's malice. The sign of the cross, alone, suffices to disarm Satan and to put him to flight. Let us extol Divine Wisdom, Who has found a means to lead us, after a persevering combat, to such transcendent glory. Must we not cry out with the psalmist: "How great are Thy works, O Lord! Thou hast made all things in wisdom, the earth is filled with Thy riches" (Ps. 103, 24)?

Affections: How marvelous, O Lord, is Thy Wisdom in the great work of the Incarnation. Thou, O most benign Jesus, hast atoned for sin, conquered death and annihilated the powers of hell. Whatever the Evil One has devised for the downfall of man, Thou, O Lord, hast turned unto good. What glory and splendor shall

await us, when, after a long and fatiguing struggle, with the aid of Thy powerful grace, we shall enter the heavenly Jerusalem as conquerors of the world, the flesh and Satan. Oh, grant us all this grace, Divine Bridegroom of our souls. Grant that we may daily prove ourselves more worthy of it, that here below we may fight a good fight and one day praise Thee in union with all the angels and saints in heaven for all eternity. Thou, holy and Immaculate Virgin, who with thy virginal foot didst crush the serpent's head, help us to achieve the victory and glorify God by a holy life.

Resolution: In the struggles and trials of the day, we will call to mind that by patience and fidelity we must conquer the enemy and acquire merit.

Spiritual Bouquet: "To them that love God, all things tend unto good."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR WEDNESDAY

THE INFINITE LOVE OF GOD IN THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION

"God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish but may have life everlasting" (John 3, 16).

First Prelude: Contemplate how the Son of God offers Himself to the Father to become Man, to make infinite satisfaction by His passion and death.

Second Prelude: O Jesus, let us recognize at what enormous price Thou hast purchased our souls, that we may gladly sacrifice all for its sanctification.

First Point

THE PRICE OF OUR REDEMPTION

"God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son." Had God given the whole visible creation and all the treasures of heaven for man's redemption, this would, beyond doubt, have been a great price, whereby His goodness would indeed have become manifest. But all this did not suffice to satisfy the demands of His infinite love. He immolated His only begotten, beloved Son for us, thus giving us the dearest, the highest, the best—all that He could give. Such love of God for us poor sinners is so incomprehensibly great that in utter amazement we cry out with St. Thomas: "O God, Thou hast so loved man as though he were Thy God, and, as if without him Thou couldst not be happy!"

If the value of an article is estimated by the price paid for it, how highly does not God value our soul since He purchased it at such infinite price! What are our obligations, then, toward Him, toward our own soul? The angels marvel at such love of God for mankind. Who of the angels should even have surmised that God would assume our human nature to regain heaven for man, which he had lost by sin since He had not shown mercy to the fallen angels, but had cast them off forever. How rarely, alas, do we think of the infinite mercy of God! We behold it with indifference, rarely thank Almighty God for it, and take little pains to further the welfare of our soul for which God paid such a dear price. Oh, that we would seriously consider the obligation incumbent upon us in our holy vocation, to share in the work of the Redemption!

Second Point

THE MANNER OF OUR REDEMPTION

"Thereby," says St. John, "we have known how God loved the world, that He gave His life for us" (John 3, 16). It was not necessary for the Son of God to suffer for our redemption. All the acts of the God-Man, being of infinite value, constitute a superabundant satisfaction for the guilt of human kind. To prove indisputably the extent of His love for us, God gave His only begotten Son as Victim of expiation for the sins of the world. To secure for us not merely redemption, but an abundance of graces to work out our salvation, the Saviour chose an exceedingly painful way of suffering, and finally the shameful death of the cross. Because mankind had fallen a prey to the lust of the eyes, to sensible gratifications and the pride of life, our Blessed Saviour willed to be the poorest of the poor. He led a despised, lowly life, and, as it were, immersed Himself in an abyss of sufferings. To such an extent God loves us. He loves us with a powerful, burning, tender, and self-immolating love. The saints never tired of admiring such boundless love, and they were consumed by an ardent desire to return Jesus love for love, sacrifice for sacrifice. They, too, chose poverty for their portion, submitted themselves cheerfully to the keenest humiliations, and crucified their flesh with voluntary penances. Nothing seemed hard for them in view of the immeasurable love of Jesus. Day by day, we ponder this excessive love of the Saviour. Should we not rejoice because of an opportunity to return His love by the practice of humility, poverty, and mortification?

Affections: O Divine Saviour, how great is Thy love!

Thou hast lavished it upon the whole world in a measure incomprehensible to both angels and men. Thou, O only begotten Son of God, hast embraced the direst misery not only to purge away the guilt of our sins, but also to manifest Thy infinite love for us sinful creatures. With everlasting love Thou hast loved us. Oh, grant that we may ardently long to love Thee with our whole heart and with all our mind. Ah, how weak and faint is not our love! Do Thou expand our hearts, and lead us on the royal way of the cross, which Thy love first has trod, into the kingdom of eternal glory. O ever blessed Virgin Mary, the object of our tenderest love, obtain for us the grace to grow in divine love and thus to become worthy spouses of thy beloved Son.

Resolution: We will perform all our actions, especially those that are repugnant to nature, for the love of Jesus.

Spiritual Bouquet: "God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR THURSDAY

OF THE DESIRE WITH WHICH THE JUST OF THE OLD LAW LONGED FOR THE COMING OF THE REDEEMER

"Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down the Just" (Is. 45, 8).

First Prelude: Behold the patriarchs and the just of the Old Law, full of ardent longing for the Redeemer, imploring God to send Him to earth.

Second Prelude: Replenish our heart, O Jesus, with a great and ardent desire for Thy grace, that we may sacrifice all to obtain it.

First Point

"DROP DOWN DEW, YE HEAVENS!"

The fathers and the just of the Old Law sighed for the Messiah, with inexpressible longing. Holy Church has embodied their longing in her prayers, that during the holy season of Advent we may suffer ourselves to be penetrated by their sentiments. The prophet Isaias, at sight of the boundless misery which sin brought into the world, exclaims: "Drop down dew, ye heavens!" He turns his attention heavenward, for all mankind are captive in the fetters of sin, and heaven alone can redeem the world. Rain and dew being symbolic of the graces of the Holy Ghost, the prophet speaks metaphorically. As the dew falls, manna once fell from heaven, announcing the future advent of the Son of God upon this earth. He is the "true Bread" that comes down from heaven and contains in Itself all sweetness.

Let us, therefore, cry out with the prophet: "Drop down dew, ye heavens! Drop down the Just!" As natural dew imparts moisture and fertility to the plants, so does the dew of grace impart to all souls in need of redemption, in this life, sanctifying grace, supernatural light and life, and in the world to come, heavenly glory. May holy desires expand our heart, for if it is not inflamed with a fiery ardor, it will remain narrow and unworthy to receive the Word, the Son of God. Let us suppress all desires and inclinations that are not directed to God, that we may realize our misery and the need we have of a Redeemer. Realizing our utter sinfulness, we will be prepared for the reception of extraordinary graces in closest union with Jesus.

What is my longing for the Saviour? Is it not, at least partly, suffocated by earthly, imperfect wishes and desires?

Second Point

"LET THE CLOUDS RAIN THE JUST!"

In an ecstasy of longing, the prophet cries out: "Let the clouds rain the Just!" He entreats the Divine Majesty to send upon the earth the desired of all creation, Whose advent should repair the evils that sin brought upon the whole world, and Whom, in His infinite love, He promised to mankind. The clouds, say the saints, are symbolic of the Blessed Virgin, for as they fructify the parched earth with refreshing rain, so Mary in her Immaculate Conception is elevated far above human sinfulness, and by her divine maternity, gives us Jesus, the Author and Source of all graces, Who calls Himself the Source of living waters. He alone is the Just, the sole Mediator between God and man; He is the infinitely holy One, for all men the sublime Exemplar of every virtue, and union with Him will make us, too, holy and just. In our daily mediations we should, therefore, fervently entreat Him: Come, Lord Jesus, come, enter my poor heart, and with the fire of Thy divine love consume my pride and obstinacy, my tepidity and indolence, my want of courage and my evil desires. Destroy in me all self-love and coldness; live and reign in my heart forever. The ardent desire for Jesus and His heavenly gifts, say the mystical writers, is a good indication, for God ordinarily imparts His gifts according to the measure of our longing, and withholds them at times to intensify our desires.

Are we animated by such a holy desire, and does it impel us to entreat, to knock, to seek, and to stake all that it may be stilled?

Affections: O Holy Spirit, refresh our hearts with the dew of divine grace, and extinguish therein the fire of passion. One only desire shall, henceforth, fill my heart: that of union with my God and Saviour, my Redeemer and Bridegroom. Take out of my heart all desires and inclinations that tend not to Thy love. Let me ever better recognize my utter misery. Tear asunder the clouds of deception with which self-love envelops my spirit; replenish my heart with a burning ardor and a desire for Thy grace, Thy love, and Thy possession. Live, move and reign evermore in our hearts, O Jesus. O holy Virgin, who didst ardently long for the coming of the Redeemer, let us share the ardor of thy love and thy desire, and thus prepare for Him a worthy dwelling-place in our hearts.

Resolution: We will frequently excite in our hearts a burning desire for Jesus and His grace.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Drop down ye heavens the Just!"

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR FRIDAY

THE PROPHETS LONG FOR THE REDEEMER—(Continued)

"Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain and just: Let the earth be opened, and bud forth a saviour: and let justice spring up together; I the Lord have created him" (Is. 45, 8).

First Prelude: Hear the fiery words of the prophet, with which he desires to inflame all hearts in renewed longing for the Saviour.

Second Prelude: Grant, O Jesus, that we offer Thy grace a receptive heart, that it may yield the fruits Thou dost expect of us.

First Point

"LET THE EARTH BE OPENED"

Having entreated heaven to send the Redeemer, the prophet desires ardently that the earth be opened and bud forth the Saviour. Since He is to be Son of God and Son of Man, He must come both from heaven and from earth. We are wont to say that "the earth is opened" when we wish to denote the advent of spring. The severe cold of winter retreats, nature clothes herself with a glorious garb of fresh verdure and flowers of various hues, and everything awakens to a new life. In like manner the pure, virginal soil gives us the Redeemer, Who brings to mankind languishing in spiritual numbness, the spring of grace. After the fall of our first parents, earth brought forth only the thorns and thistles of sin. Through Jesus, Who established the empire of sanctity in His Church, the earth is fruitful in the virtues of the Apostles, the martyrs, the vrigins, the saints of all states of life. They were a receptive soil, which brought forth the most glorious blossoms and fruits of grace.

The words: "Let the earth be opened" apply to all. We should not seal our hearts to the grace of God, nor be indifferent to the treasures which the Saviour offers us. The Jews at the time of our Lord were, indeed, a hard, unfruitful soil, and even among the Christians countless hearts are not receptive for the grace of God. Willful and habitful venial sins transform the heart into a stony soil, overgrown with thorns and thistles. Furthermore,

by idleness and indifference in the spiritual exercises, by vain curiosity, by talkativeness and dissipation, by frivolous and uncharitable judgments, by aversion and dislike for others, by vanity, pride and self-will, we gradually lose all relish for divine things.

Let us ponder well what our past life has been. If we detect even one of the above-named venial sins in our lives, let us not hesitate to combat it vigorously. The longer we defer this combat, or grow sluggish in it, the more difficulties we shall encounter and the more sterile will our hearts become.

Second Point

"THE EARTH BUD FORTH THE SAVIOUR"

These words are applicable not only to the Blessed Virgin but also to the Christian soul, who with the assistance of divine grace, ought to become a nearly perfect image of Jesus Christ. She must strive to bear resemblance to Jesus in all her thoughts, words, and actions, in her sentiments as well as in her exterior conduct. This is our purpose in life. St. Paul accomplished it so perfectly that he could say: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2, 20). He would say: The old man, with his affection for the works of darkness, no longer lives in me, but, with the grace of God, I have put on the new man, who is in truth, justice and holiness; with him I am so intimately united, that all my thoughts, words and actions are transformed into his. I seek, further, to live as Jesus Christ would live if He were in my place. He could refer the Corinthians to his example saying: "Be ye followers of me as I am also of Christ" (Cor. 4, 16). God wills that His perfections be reflected in us as in a

mirror; therefore, He enlightens our understanding, gives us His grace, and inflames our heart with the fire of His love. It lies with us to replenish the image of God within us, for according to the words of the Apostle: "We should resemble Him, when He shall appear and reform the body of our lowness, that it may be like to the body of His glory" (Phil. 3, 21).

Are divine love, mercy, and goodness, faithfully mirrored in my soul? Do I resemble Jesus in His poverty and His holy obedience?

Affections: O Eternal Word of the heavenly Father, Thou wert made flesh and didst dwell among us that we might behold Thy amiability and sanctity, and strive with all our might to imitate them. Thou art the true image of the invisible God, Thy heavenly Father, Thou art our Model, Whom we should resemble. O Lord, Thou knowest how ardently we long to be Thy faithful imitators, but Thou knowest, also, how great are our ignorance and weakness. We pray Thee, Divine Teacher, be Thou our light and strength. Make our hearts receptive for Thy grace, for with it we can do all things. O Mary, Mirror of Justice and Seat of Wisdom, faithful imitator of the virtues of the Word made Flesh, teach us to merit the divine complacency and to draw down upon ourselves abundant graces by our zeal and persevering effort in the striving for virtue.

Resolution: We will be attentive to the interior enlightenments and movements of grace and seek to correspond to them zealously.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Let the earth be opened and bud forth the Saviour."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR SATURDAY

THE ELECTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN TO THE DIGNITY OF DIVINE MATERNITY

"There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root" (Is. 11, 1).

First Prelude: Call to mind how God foreshadowed the sublime dignity and sanctity of the Blessed Mother of God through the prophets of the Old Law and prefigured it by many types.

Second Prelude: O holy Virgin, who didst co-operate most perfectly with the grace of thy election, teach us to correspond to the designs of God with regard to our sanctification, by faithful co-operation with grace.

First Point

GOD HIMSELF PREPARES THE BLESSED VIRGIN FOR HER SUBLIME DIGNITY

From all eternity God had chosen a mother for His only-begotten Son, and in view of her lofty dignity, endowed her with superabundant graces. Oh, the marvelous beauty of Mary, unlike that of any other creature! The loveliness imparted to her from the splendor of the Divinity surpassed that of all the angels and saints. Such extraordinary sanctity was meet for her whom God the Father adopted as His daughter, whom the Son chose to be His mother, and the Holy Ghost, His spouse. The graces and prerogatives that God confers on His creatures are always commensurate with His loving designs in their regard. In virtue of her spotless conception Mary was from the first moment of her existence resplendent with

marvelous sanctity, but ever docile to the gentle movements of grace to such a degree as rendered her worthy to be the Tabernacle of the Most High.

Consequently, as a tender child, God called her into His Temple, where He transformed her, in holy solitude, into a sanctuary of divine wisdom and love, worthy of His divine complacency. God imparted to Mary so wonderful a love of chastity that in tender childhood she vowed virginity, and consented to the espousal with St. Joseph only on condition that her virginity be preserved intact. Thus God, jealous of her love, lured her into His service by His sweet attractions, with body and soul, subjecting all her faculties to the exclusive operations of divine love, and suffered not the smallest particle of His dearest possession to be despoiled of its luster by even the slightest sin or imperfection.

Let us offer thanks to God and rejoice in the wonderful prerogatives of our Mother Mary. At the same time, let us also thank God for the special grace of our religious vocation. If God has loved us more than others, we are obviously obliged to prove our gratitude by loving Him more ardently in return. If God has dealt more mercifully with us than with others we, too, must be more indulgent and charitable toward our neighbor.

Second Point

MARY CORRESPONDED PERFECTLY TO THE GRACE OF HER ELECTION

Though Mary had not the least intimation of the great dignity that was in store for her, as Mother of the Saviour, nevertheless, her whole life was a continued preparation for this extraordinary grace. From her earliest infancy, the Holy Ghost inured her to the most rigor-

ous custody of the senses and all the affections of her heart. Mary exercised herself constantly in every virtue, kept earthly thoughts aloof and directed all her desires and aspirations to God alone. Thus she complied perfectly with the precept which was ever before her mind: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind" (Matt. 22, 37). Her desire for the promised Redeemer was inexpressibly great. If the longing of the prophet was so intense that he exclaimed: "Oh, that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and wouldst come down" (Is. 64, 1), how intense must have been the longing of the Blessed Virgin, since she realized that the time had come for the Saviour to appear. Like fragrant incense, her sighs and yearnings ascended to God, and the heavens opened to receive her prayers, which the angels bore to the throne of the Almighty. Her virtues presented a fit counterpoise to the crimes of sinners, who had rendered themselves undeserving of divine benefits and favors. In virtue of Mary's prayers God stooped to sinful man, who had offended Him so grievously. How great should be our joy as children of such a Mother! She has become our intercessor and mediatrix with God, Who for her sake has taken pity on us. In this holy season we will unite with our Blessed Mother and beg her to assist us to prepare our hearts for the coming of the Saviour, and to teach us how to draw the Infant Saviour into our hearts by fervent aspirations and desires.

Affections: O holy Virgin, thou rod out of the root of Jesse, whose fragrance ascends to heaven! From the beginning, thou wert chosen by God to bring the Redeemer to mankind. The patriarchs longed for thee, and the prophets announced thee, the just of Israel long awaited

thee, and finally, through God's infinite mercy, thou wert given to the world. O holy and sublime Virgin, Mother and Daughter of the Eternal King, every mouth shall proclaim thy praise, every soul extol thy glory. Lead us to Jesus, thy Divine Son, that He, Who was given us through thee, may through thee graciously receive us. Amen.

Resolution: We will often beg the Blessed Virgin to teach us how to prepare our hearts for the advent of the Saviour by fidelity to grace.

Spiritual Bouquet: "The Most High has sanctified His own tabernacle" (Ps. 45, 5).

Prayer: Hail Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE MESSENGERS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

"Now when John had heard in prison the works of Christ: sending two of his disciples he said to him: Art thou that art to come, or look we for another? And Jesus making answer said to them: Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in Me" (Matt. 11, 2-6).

First Prelude: Behold the messengers that St. John sent to our Lord; behold the poor, the sick and infirm who surround Jesus in order to be cured.

Second Prelude: Grant me grace, O Jesus, to render myself worthy of my holy vocation by fidelity in Thy service.

First Point

CONTEMPLATE ST. JOHN AND THE MESSENGERS HE SENT TO OUR LORD

What consolation must it have afforded St. John in prison to hear from his disciples of Christ's astounding miracles. Nevertheless, the disciples were so attached to their master that despite the teachings of Jesus they had not arrived at the conviction that He was the promised Messiah. Hence, also, their jealousy of Christ's marvelous success. Therefore St. John sent his disciples to Jesus to afford them an opportunity of making His acquaintance. Must we not admire the holy zeal of St. John who even in prison seeks ways and means to exercise his holy office, to prepare the way for the Messiah and to gain disciples for Him? How lovingly is he intent upon correcting the faults of his disciples, since when words are inadequate to convince them he resorts to action!

Oh, that we were animated with a like zeal for the salvation of our neighbor and the honor of God! For this service ample opportunity is offered us in our holy vocation. Let us note the words the disciples address to Jesus: "Art Thou He that art to come or look we for another?" We know that the Saviour is He Who was to come, and Who in reality came to redeem the world, and that we need not wait for another. He alone can and will redeem us, draw us to Himself and sanctify us. All others that try to imbue us with their false maxims —the world, the devil and self-love, can only effect our ruin. Let us carefully guard against attaching ourselves to our adversaries, or yielding to them even in trifles; let us consecrate ourselves to the Service of God Who

wills our sanctification, but Who will, likewise, be our Judge.

Second Point

PONDER OUR LORD'S ANSWER TO THE MESSENGERS

The answer our Lord made to the messengers was truly worthy of His sublime mission. In their presence He cured the sick, the blind, the halt and those possessed of an evil spirit, thus manifesting His omnipotence and goodness, which were to be the distinctive marks of the Messiah. Calling to their minds the prophecy of Isaias, Jesus furnished the messengers with the most perfect, unmistakable and immovable conviction of His divine mission. Our Lord would teach us here that religious must convince the world by their whole demeanor, by all their actions and omissions. They must show the world that they are disciples of Christ, wholly impregnated with His divine doctrine. As the Christians of the primitive Church were recognized by charity, so must charity ever be the characteristic of religious. Must they not rejoice, praise and magnify the Lord, Who perpetuates the works of His infinite love and mercy in His holy Church? As Jesus, during His life on earth was an object of scandal, so is He even now in the person of His followers. "Blessed," Jesus concludes His discourse with the messengers, "blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in Me."

The sublimity of the mysteries of the Lord and the incomprehensibility of His ways, the sanctity and purity of His doctrine, are an object of scandal to the proud and sensual. Poverty, humility, and meekness are hard sayings which they cannot take. Ought we not be fearful of having the least part in these scandals? Ought we not rather strive to be of the number of those blessed souls

who are wholly devoted to Jesus, and who lovingly seek and find Him?

Affections: O my Divine Saviour, with my whole heart I believe and confess that Thou art the Messiah, that Thou art my Lord and my God. Animated by a holy love, I cheerfully renew my consecration to Thy holy service in the office entrusted to me. Bless me, my beloved Saviour, and by Thy power and merits render my labors fruitful. Impart to my feeble words that vigor and unction that will penetrate all hearts and win them to Thy love. Inflame my heart with the fire of charity that, imparting it to those committed to my care, I may incite them all to Thy imitation.

Resolution: I will patiently and charitably bear with the faults and imperfections of my charges, and teach them to love Jesus.

Spiritual Bouquet: "The blind see, the lame walk, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR MONDAY

THE ANGEL GABRIEL IS SENT TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

"The angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth" (Luke 2, 26).

First Prelude: In spirit, see the little house in which Mary dwelt.

Second Prelude: Teach me, O holy Virgin, in imitation of thy example, to love solitude and silence, that I may perceive the divine inspirations.

First Point

CONTEMPLATE THE ANGEL GABRIEL SENT FROM GOD TO THE VIRGIN MARY

When the time had come that the Son of God should become man, God sent a messenger to announce His decree. He chose an angel of first rank, who bears the name "Gabriel"—"power of God." This angel directed his steps not into big cities, not to gorgeous palaces, nor to a princess—he went to Nazareth, to an insignificant town, to a poor Virgin, who dwelt in a little cottage. To her, God sent His angel; in her, He willed to work the greatest wonder of His Omnipotence. God considers neither gifts of nature nor of birth—modesty, humility, innocence and love of purity, alone, have value and true merit in His esteem. How often are those that the world despises, esteemed by God! How much better is it to be truly great before God than to appear so in the eyes of man! Mary is unknown to the world; she loves solitude, silence and retirement; but God singles her out and prefers her to the daughters of kings.

Would we be pleasing to God and draw upon ourselves His divine complacence, then with Mary we must seek seclusion, love silence and recollection, and we, too, shall learn to have sweet converse with God and His angels. They are His mouth-piece, announcing His Will and asking for admittance into our hearts.

Do we always receive such heavenly messengers cheerfully, and do we strive to comply with their injunctions? Do we love solitude and silence? Are we docile to the voice of the angel who announces to us the holy Will of God?

Second Point

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MESSAGE

Let us admire the mildness of God in the execution of His design. It was His to command and to execute His projects without the consent of the Blessed Virgin. His goodness, however, did not wish to act thus, so as not in the least to impair her freedom. To increase her merit immeasurably the Blessed Virgin was to assume the dignity of Divine Maternity, which was to be for her the cause of untold suffering. God deals similarly with us; He incites us to good, but leaves the execution of the deed to our own free will, assisted by His grace. It would be a great misfortune for us were we to reject the offer of God's mercy and fail to enter upon His designs concerning our salvation.

We rarely consider how much depends upon a single divine inspiration, what graces we would often insure for ourselves by faithful co-operation! Alas, what danger lurks beneath grace misused! Sad to say, very few correspond to the designs of God, because, on the one hand, they lack sufficient fidelity and, on the other, the necessary courage for the sacrifices demanded by grace. God warns, exhorts, and urges them. If they do not heed His call, He withdraws and leaves them in darkness and ignorance. Who can depict the misery of such souls! Learn from Mary to be faithful to grace, for such fidelity will insure additional and greater graces, whereas, on the other hand, we shall have to render a strict account before the judgment seat of God for every grace forfeited.

Affections: O holy, glorious Virgin, Mother of God, who wast vouchsafed the happiness of giving birth to the Son of God, and of presenting the Redeemer to the world,

we rejoice with thee! We thank God, Who in view of such an incomparable dignity, for which thou wert chosen from all eternity, endowed thee with all graces. Be mindful of us with thy beloved Son, our Saviour and Redeemer. Obtain for us a share in the graces and virtues that made thee so pleasing in the sight of God; implore for us, especially, the grace to follow thee in love of seclusion, silence and holy recollection, that our hearts may be made receptive for the graces of the Holy Ghost, and thus be a worthy abode for Thy Divine Son.

Resolution: We will follow the inspirations of grace and strive to maintain interior recollection and solitude, as much as possible, during this holy season.

Spiritual Bouquet: "A virgin hath brought forth One Who was both God and man."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR TUESDAY

THE ANGELIC SALUTATION

"And the angel being come in, said unto her: 'Hail, full of grace' " (Luke 28).

First Prelude: In spirit enter the Blessed Virgin's humble dwelling and hear the angel reverently saluting her.

Second Prelude: O ever blessed Virgin Mary, accept our praises and salutations with complacency and obtain for us a share in thy plenitude of grace.

First Point

"HAIL MARY"

Commissioned by God, one of the foremost of the heavenly hosts reverently approaches the Blessed Virgin and salutes her: "Hail, full of grace!" What a sublime greeting! To honor Mary, and to manifest to succeeding generations her inexpressible dignity, the Triune God charged the archangel Gabriel to salute her thus. It is the first word of the beautiful prayer so often recited in connection with the Our Father; a word in which are implied at once the reverence of the angel and the condescension of God; a word of inexpressible sweetness and charm. Mary's consent to the decree of the Most High transformed the guilt of Eve into grace, life, and benediction for us. Therefore all generations shall call her blessed. What inexpressible delight must it not have afforded Mary thus to be honored by God Himself, through the mouth of one of the most distinguished spirits! Mary's honor is even now increased and her virginal heart is filled anew with heavenly sweetness by the pious repetition of this salutation and the devout remembrance of that exquisite delight.

"Ave"—hail! we, too, salute thee, ever blessed Virgin, thou art full of grace; hail, the Lord is with thee in a special manner; hail, thou art blessed among women. Oh, how must this salutation please our heavenly Mother, when pronounced with pure lips and loving heart, with humblest veneration and profoundest reverence. It is meet that the Queen of heaven and earth, the exalted Mother of God, whom to greet the angel deemed an honor, be ever saluted with sentiments of profoundest respect and humility; that we preserve our hearts and

lips pure and holy, in order to salute the purest Virgin worthily. How often during the day have we occasion to pronounce this sweet salutation in honor of our sweetest Mother! As often as we salute Mary with child-like love and tenderness, say the saints, she returns the salutation with a grace. While we repeat the Angelic Salutation frequently, let us not suffer our fervor to grow cold. How many graces should we otherwise forfeit!

Second Point

"FULL OF GRACE"

Though many saints received very special graces from almighty God, His blessings were poured out abundantly upon Mary. Utilizing these graces to such advantage, she rendered herself worthy of new and greater ones. Resplendent in the radiance of sanctifying grace, Mary was full of faith, hope and love, of obedience, humility and patience, and every other virtue. Her memory was replete with holy thoughts, her understanding illumined with heavenly light, her heart, replenished with love of God and zeal for His glory, full of longing for the advent of the Messiah and the redemption of the world.

Thus the angel found her wrapt in contemplation, when he intruded upon the holy peace and quiet of her solitude, to bring her the heavenly message. He found her worthy, indeed, to receive the Author and Dispenser of all graces, and through Him to become the channel of grace for all mankind. Has not God deposited in Mary the fullness of all good that it might flow to us through her? All graces should flow to us, henceforth, through the hands of Mary who is the inexhaustible fountainhead

of graces, spreading its channels in every direction, and through its thousands of branches fructifying the whole Catholic Church. No country, no place in the wide world is excluded from the influence of this saving flood. The just and the sinners alike draw copiously from it—the former, that they may grow in virtue; the latter, that they may be released from the bondage of sin and restored to the freedom of the children of God. Would we have a generous share in the plenitude of graces bestowed on Mary, then we must emulate her fidelity to grace. We must banish from our hearts all voluntary faults and negligence in the spiritual exercises, which prove a great hindrance to grace. A superabundance of graces will be imparted to those, only, who by their fidelity and generous co-operation have qualified themselves for its reception.

What is the cause of my spiritual poverty? Can the Blessed Virgin mediate graces for me if I place obstacles to the operation of grace by voluntary faults and infidelities?

Affections: We salute thee, O ever blessed Virgin, full of grace, our mediator and intercessor. We rejoice in the glory and wealth of graces with which God endowed thee. No tongue can tell their immensity. Not even the holy archangel Gabriel could adequately extol the plenitude of divine grace of which thou wert the recipient. The Lord endowed thee so lavishly because from all eternity thou wert chosen to be the Mother of the Eternal Word, because thou wert to be the dispenser of divine grace, the Mother of the redeemed. Be mindful, therefore, of the countless souls who have recourse to thee, in the trials and hardships of life. Entreat for us grace that will make us pleasing to thy Son and to thee, but especially obtain for us perfect love of God and perseverance to the end.

Resolution: During the holy season of Advent, I will say the Angelus with special devotion.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Hail, full of grace!"

Prayer: Remember, O most gracious Virgin . . .

MEDITATION FOR WEDNESDAY

"THE LORD IS WITH THEE" (LUKE 1, 28)

First Prelude: Behold the angel Gabriel in heavenly splendor, entering the humble chamber of the Blessed Virgin and reverently saluting her.

Second Prelude: O Blessed Mother of God, teach us how to remain constantly united with God through perfect resignation to the Divine Will.

First Point

GOD WAS WITH MARY

Mary received the assurance from the angel Gabriel that God was with her. Mary had always been under the special protection of the Lord, since even at the moment of her conception, she was immaculate, spotless and holy. The Blessed Trinity was with her. The Father lavished upon His beloved daughter, the most tender solicitude; the Son enriched her in advance with His superabundant merits; and the Holy Ghost sanctified her incessantly as His chosen spouse. If in the Old Testament God held loving intercourse with His chosen people, and in virtue of such union imparted abundant graces to them, how generously must He have endowed the Blessed Virgin! What wonderful things must He have wrought in her especially at the moment when the Son of God deigned to take up His abode within her.

We can say in very truth that God dwells in souls possessed of sanctifying grace. How inexpressibly great such happiness! With God, they courageously resist the temptations of the Evil One; with God, they are strong and constant in the practice of virtue; with God, they are calm in the midst of storms, happy in spite of tribulations, crying out with the Psalmist: "I fear no evils, for Thou, O Lord, art with me" (Ps. 22, 4).

If union with God through sanctifying grace makes us inexpressibly happy, our happiness reaches the climax when Jesus comes to us in Holy Communion. Oh, that we would faithfully employ those precious moments of the Real Presence! How do I dispose of the moments of the sacramental union immediately after Holy Communion?

Second Point

IN IMITATION OF OUR HOLY MOTHER WE SHOULD PRACTICE UNINTERRUPTED UNION WITH GOD IN HUMBLE SURRENDER OF OUR WHOLE BEING

As God was always with Mary and completely engrossed her being, so was Mary always united with God through the ardor of her love and her perfect resignation to His holy Will. Her tender and ardent love of God was inflamed in the first moment of her existence. By continuous sacrifices and the exercise of the most heroic virtues it was augmented to such a degree that she far surpassed the seraphim in love; in all situations in life, in fortune and mishap, in joy and sorrow, she was ever the resigned and humble handmaid of the Lord, who said with all her heart: "Be it done unto me according to thy word!"

We, too, should foster such union with God, for He is a God of love and desires our love. Our heart with

all its tendencies should be His; it should hate and detest nothing more than sin, which alone can separate us from God. Not satisfied with this, God-loving souls, like Mary, endeavor always to grow in love, by striving in daily meditation to know God's lovableness more and more. Why is there so much indifference? Is it not because men know God so little and make no effort to acquire knowledge of Him? How happy are religious who by the faithful use of the proffered means, constantly grow in love of God! Incited by this love they will become perfect and, like Mary, know no other desires, no greater happiness, than to see the all-holy and most amiable Will of God perfectly accomplished in them, in life and in death. Let us beg the "Mother of fair love" (Sir. 24-24) to impart to us a spark of the fire that burned within her heart, and made her worthy to become the Mother of God.

Affections: O holiest Virgin, with profound reverence I say with the angel: "The Lord is with thee." Yea, He is with thee, who art blessed among women, and He will be with thee through all eternity. With the greatest joy, I contemplate the inexpressible happiness that thou, O holy Virgin, didst find in the possession of God. In Him thou dost possess the source of all graces, the vast wealth of heavenly treasures. Oh, obtain for me a share in the glorious happiness of union with God. Pray your Divine Son to be ever near with His grace that I may be firmly riveted to Him by the bond of love, that I may live in Him and He in me through all eternity.

Resolution: I will cherish recollection of the presence of God and perform all my actions in union with Him.

Spiritual Bouquet: Lord, abide with me by Thy grace that I may remain faithful to Thee.

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR THURSDAY

THE ANGEL CALMS THE BLESSED VIRGIN

"Who having heard was troubled at his saying, and thought what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said to her: 'Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God' " (Luke 1, 29).

First Prelude: Again, in spirit, enter the humble dwelling at Nazareth and contemplate the Blessed Virgin, troubled at the angel's words.

Second Prelude: Ask of the Blessed Virgin a share in her wonderful humility and unbounded confidence.

First Point

EFFECTS OF THE ANGELIC SALUTATION

The evangelist relates that "When Mary heard this she was troubled, and thought what manner of salutation this should be." Mary's fear proceeded from her deep humility. It was not the appearance of the angel, not the wonderful splendor surrounding him that troubled her—she was accustomed to intercourse with heavenly spirits, as the mystical writers say; but she was troubled at the angel's words. He had said: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, Blessed art thou among women" (Luke 1, 28). Her humility was unable to comprehend the extraordinary distinction suggested by these words.

What an example does the Blessed Virgin set us in this mystery! She had every reason to rejoice at the angel's message; yet she feared; her heart sought no honor, no preference, she rejected the praise bestowed upon her. She deemed herself unworthy to be thus singu-

larly honored by God with such rare graces. Her humility is as profound as her knowledge of God is sublime and exalted. Why are there so few humble souls? Is it not because profound knowledge of God and thorough knowledge of self are rarely found among men? If we wish to advance in perfection we must strive earnestly to grow in this two-fold knowledge, and often propound to ourselves the question: "Who is God and who am I?" St. Charles Borromeo who was so deeply grounded in humility, said: "Mary, the humble Virgin, becomes troubled on hearing an angel praise her in virtue of a divine command; we, miserable sinners, crave the empty praises of men."

All those who constantly commune with God by the contemplation of divine things, and a pure life, flee honor and praise, and if such, nevertheless, are accorded them, they accept them reluctantly. How am I disposed in this respect? Do I bear in mind that the grace of God finds no entrance into a heart, filled with self?

Second Point

THE ANGEL CALMS THE BLESSED VIRGIN

Noticing the fear of Mary, the angel quieted her and said: "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God" (Luke 1, 30). It is peculiar to the spirit of God to dispel fear from our hearts. An inspiration is divine if it begets peace and implicit confidence in God, which are ever its special marks. The false insinuations of the Evil One always beget unrest and usually mislead to vain presumption and mistrust in God's mercy. No imperfection attached to the Blessed Virgin's fear, but the angel

dispelled it that she might receive the divine message with perfect composure. "Thou hast found grace with God," this is the reason why Mary should not fear; she possessed God's grace, His love and pleasure. This consciousness is an impenetrable shield against all fear, for what could frighten her whom the Holy Ghost assures that she is a child of God?

Oh, let us guard against losing the grace of God or weakening its effects through our fault! On our death-bed, nothing shall be able to give us greater assurance than the knowledge that, with the grace of God, we have always endeavored to do what we recognized as pleasing to Him, feared sin and by contrition and penance, atoned for the sins committed. May we not in all humility and confidence, still hope to find grace with God? Let us beg Mary, who constantly corresponded to every grace, to help us repair our past abuse of graces by redoubled zeal and fervor.

Do I suffer myself to be unnecessarily disquieted and troubled by the insinuations of the devil? Have I not thus lost much valuable time?

Affections: O Mary, thou blest Spouse of the Holy Spirit, blest Mother of the Eternal Word, glorious Queen of Angels, amiable Mother of Mercy, how I rejoice in thy ineffable happiness! Truly, with fullest justice did the angel say to thee: "Thou hast found grace with God." And in what measure hadst thou found grace! Thou hadst not only received the fullness of grace thyself, but, in thy adorable Son, the source and fountain-head of all graces and merits. Oh, how rich and happy art thou! Pray incessantly for me that thy Divine Son may pardon all my sins and endow me with grace, wisdom and divine love. Pray that He may grant me a happy death, be

merciful to me in Judgment and receive me into the abode of eternal peace and bliss.

Resolution: I will manifest great modesty and reserve in my words and actions.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God."

Prayer: Remember, O most gracious Virgin . . .

MEDITATION FOR FRIDAY

THE QUESTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN AND THE ANGEL'S ANSWER

"And Mary said to the angel: 'How shall this be done?' and the angel answering said to her: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, because no word shall be impossible with God' " (Luke 1, 34-37).

First Prelude: Reverently enter the Blessed Virgin's humble abode and listen to her discourse with the heavenly messenger.

Second Prelude: O Immaculate Virgin, let me learn of thee a tender love of holy virginity and humble confidence in the all-powerful assistance of God.

First Point

"HOW SHALL THIS BE DONE?"

Must we not admire the prudent reserve of the Blessed Virgin, who spoke only after having well considered the angel's words? She was not incredulous, but only desired to know how his message could be harmonized with her vow of virginity: "How shall this be done?" The

magic of this word has drawn countless souls to Christ, and merited for Mary the glorious title "Queen of Virgins." How perfectly did the sentiments of Mary conform to the designs of God, and how worthy did she appear of the sublime dignity about to be conferred upon her! It was her spotless purity, her love of virginity that made her the object of the especial love and predilection of Jesus; that made her worthy to become His Mother. He delights to dwell in pure hearts. Would we have Jesus dwell in our hearts, too, then we must endeavor to keep even the very shadow of sin aloof. We have long since given Jesus our hearts, of which He is so jealous. Should we not displease Him, therefore, by entertaining unnecessary or even dangerous thoughts? How necessary is it not for us in imitation of the example of our holy Mother, to be reserved in our words, to curb our curiosity which so endangers purity and humility! Let us love seclusion and shun seeing and being seen, lest the beautiful splendor of the angelic virtue be marred in us, that God may look upon us with pleasure and impart His graces abundantly.

Do my words testify to a pure heart and prudent reserve? Do I love solitude, mortification of the eyes and the tongue, as custodians of holy purity?

Second Point

THE ANSWER OF THE ANGEL

The angel assures Mary that the ineffable mystery shall be accomplished in her by the operation of the Holy Ghost. The same Divine Omnipotence which wrought the astounding miracle of the Incarnation in Mary, must effect all good in us. It must overshadow us, strengthen us in temptation and complete the work of grace, our

sanctification. Let us not obstruct the operations of the Holy Spirit in our soul, nor suffer ourselves to be misled by sensuality, self-love, and human respect.

To confirm Mary in confidence, but more for our instruction, the angel concludes with the words: "No word shall be impossible with God." To all the difficulties that loom up in our imagination, either to make our faith waver or to shake our trust, let us answer: I believe because God has revealed it: I hope for all that He has promised, for with God nothing is impossible. Let us seek encouragement with St. Paul, when he says: I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4, 13). Provided I am docile to His grace, God will accomplish whatever He has entrusted to me. The discharge of the duties of my office, the perfect accomplishment of every task assigned to me by obedience, will become possible through Him to Whom nothing is impossible.

Nevertheless, in our endeavor to acquire perfection, in the combat of our evil propensities, our inherent misery may assert itself and advance the objection: How is it possible that I shall ever become a zealous religious? Oh, in answer to such timidity we, too, hear the words of the angel: "With God there is nothing impossible." Even lukewarm souls, if they are truly humble, faithful to grace, and constant in prayer, shall become fervent and their works fruitful for eternal life.

Affections: O purest Virgin, enhanced by thy wisdom and humility, virginity shines forth in thee in all its splendor. Thou hast merited to conceive and to present to us Him Who comes as the "Blessed in the name of the Lord." Thou fillest heaven with exultation and bliss, and earth with joy and delight. O Mary, who hast found grace which establishes peace between God and man, ob-

tain for thy children, a share of this blessed peace. Obtain for us thy profound humility, thy heavenly purity, thy fiery steadfast love of God, that nothing may be impossible for us, and that with implicit trust in God we may accomplish all His sacred designs.

Resolution: In all difficulties, I will humbly have recourse to God.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Nothing shall be impossible with God."

Prayer: Remember, O most gracious Virgin . . .

MEDITATION FOR SATURDAY

MARY CONSENTS TO BECOME THE MOTHER OF GOD

"And Mary said: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done unto me according to Thy word'" (Luke 1, 28).

First Prelude: Remain near the Blessed Virgin and full of holy joy, in company with the angel, listen to the expression of her humble obedience.

Second Prelude: Obtain for me the grace, O holy Virgin, ever to fulfill the holy Will of God by faithful and cheerful obedience to the directions of my superiors, and exact observance of our Holy Rule.

First Point

"BEHOLD THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD"

With what exquisite delight did the angel receive Mary's reply placed on her lips by the Holy Ghost: "Be-

hold the handmaid of the Lord!" What profound humility lay concealed under these words! Surely, the Blessed Virgin, who was humble of heart, would have been guilty of no fault if, full of joy and exultation at the rare graces received, she had called herself a spouse of the Holy Spirit, a friend of God. The more the Most High overwhelmed her with favors the more did Mary immerse herself in admiration and praise of the Divine Goodness and Mercy, Who bestows choicest graces upon man, without any deserts on his part. Mary recognized the profound abasement and boundless love of her God in the mystery of the Incarnation, persevered in loving admiration, and offered Him as most fitting homage, her own profound annihilation and humiliation.

The Holy Ghost, alone, could teach Mary to unite the most contradictory extremes. She believed firmly that she would become the Mother of God, and still called herself His handmaid. How can such utter abasement harmonize with so sublime a dignity? Oh, the depths of the wisdom of God! It teaches us to preserve humility even in the most exalted station, and, despite great merits, to regard ourselves but lightly and with contempt. God reveals His mysteries to the little and the humble. The more graces He confers on them and the more He blesses their labors, the less they are occupied with self, and the more they become absorbed in God. Oh, that we would learn the practice of sincere humility from our holy Mother! If she calls herself the handmaid of the Lord, must not we deem ourselves happy to be able to call ourselves servants of the poor and the ignorant? Should not we, therefore, sacrifice all to be in reality always and everywhere truly humble servants of the Lord?

Second Point

"BE IT DONE UNTO ME ACCORDING TO THY WORD!"

These words are an indication of Mary's perfect submission to the holy Will of God. At that moment Mary most probably, by divine intuition, foresaw the sufferings that should be her portion as Mother of God. From Holy Writ, she had learned of the sorrows that awaited her. Expounders of Scripture say that by consenting to become the Mother of God, Mary acquired more graces and merits than all creatures together should be able to merit. "Be it done unto me according to Thy Word!" What an excellent word for all servants of God, especially for religious! Can a more beautiful one be thought of? When the sound of the bell calls us to a duty, or we receive a commission from our superiors, let us cheerfully say: "Fiat!" in imitation of our dear Mother. "Be it done unto me according to Thy word,"—not according to my will, to self-love or personal comfort.

There are especial moments in life when almighty God, by His loving inspirations or through the voice of our superiors, demands a sacrifice of us. As children of our heavenly Mother could we hesitate? Three times a day, Holy Mother Church asks us to repeat these words of our Blessed Mother. Let us always say them with full submission to the decrees of Divine Providence, and hold ourselves in readiness to repeat with our Blessed Mother, the "Fiat!" of perfect fidelity and love, should God in the course of the day, see fit to test our obedience.

Affections: O Mary, happy Virgin, thou callest thyself a handmaid but thou art also His Mother, His Spouse. Thou art a handmaid, but at the same time Queen of Angels. Thou art the servant most pleasing to God and

the object of His tenderest love. Oh, obtain for me the grace always and everywhere to say with ardent love: Behold, O Lord, I am Thy handmaid, be it done unto me according to Thy word. Henceforth I will no longer close my ears to Thy holy inspirations. Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth! Thy servant is ready to do Thy will. But assist me with Thy grace, that I may perfectly fulfill, not only Thy commands, but even Thy slightest wish.

Resolution: I will obey cheerfully and readily, when called to a duty, be it by the voice of my superior or by the precepts of our Holy Rule.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word!"

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE TESTIMONY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CONCERNING CHRIST

"The Jews sent from Jerusalem priests and levites to him, to ask him: 'Who art thou?' He confessed: 'I am not Christ. But there has stood One in the midst of you, Whom you know not. The same is He that shall come after me, Who is preferred before me; the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loose' " (John 1, 19, 26, 27).

First Prelude: In spirit, see the banks of the Jordan where St. John baptizes.

Second Prelude: O Divine Saviour, give me grace to know myself that I may correct my faults, and make Thy-

self better known to me that I may love Thee more and more.

First Point

THE PROFOUND HUMILITY OF ST. JOHN

The Jews sent priests and levites to John in the desert to ask him whether he is the Christ. The sanctity of his life was so manifest and had diffused such light, that he was universally held to be the Messiah, or at least a great prophet. John, however, confessed, "I am not the Christ" and added humbly, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." Jesus had called him the greatest man ever born of woman, more than prophet. He was an Elias, according to the spirit, announcing the advent of Him to whom all prophecies referred, but in his own estimation he was not even worthy to loose the latchet of Christ's shoes.

How does the humility of St. John condemn our pride! How much do we think of ourselves, how eager are we to make known our imaginary advantages and to display our overrated possible good qualities! Even though, at times, we speak depreciatingly of ourselves, is it not done with a view of meriting praise? Let us, in all sincerity and in the presence of the Supreme Judge, answer the question: "Who art thou?" If the grace of God has led us into religion, how do we now fulfill the duties of our holy state? Alas, cannot we say with much more truth than did St. Bernard: I am only a religious in name, because I lead a life of distractions. In my holy calling I should excel in the practice of virtues, but I am conscious only of faults and imperfections?

Let us often ask ourselves what others think and say of us. The reproach of men, and especially the loving

admonitions of our fellow-religious, may prove very beneficial, if we take them in good part. We will, in the future frequently call to mind that our fate for all eternity is determined by the one question "Who art thou?" and often earnestly put it to ourselves. What progress might I not have made, had I corresponded generously to the graces imparted to me so abundantly!

Second Point

ST. JOHN'S TESTIMONY OF CHRIST

Profoundly humble, St. John speaks very little of himself, but takes pleasure in dwelling at length upon the greatness of our Lord. "But there has stood One in the midst of you Whom you know not. The same is He that shall come after me. Who is preferred before me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loose." So glorious a testimony made by a man of the type of St. John under the existing circumstances, was well calculated to impress the messengers favorably, as well as those who had sent them, had they been properly disposed. Despising, however, the proffered light, they yielded themselves up to deception and blindness.

In our day countless Christians, even, deserve the reproach of St. John: "In your midst there has stood One whom you know not." They labor diligently to acquire accomplishments, study the biographies of distinguished men, of whose great deeds they should be ashamed to be ignorant, but they know very little or nothing of our dear Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and make little effort to acquire such knowledge; consequently, they do not love Him. So long as Saul was estranged to the truths of religion, he was a furious persecutor of the

Church of God, but once the mercy of God had led him to the true fold of Christ, his ambition, his persevering zeal, his only desire was directed henceforth to growth in the knowledge of Christ, Jesus. Hence, also, his ardent love, his eloquence, when from the fullness of his heart he depicts the charms of the love of God and of neighbor.

May the reproach which the Baptist addressed to the Jews not apply to the spouses of Christ, in whose midst He dwells, whom He daily nourishes with His Flesh and Blood, and whom they should study diligently during the daily meditation? Let it be our earnest endeavor, especially during the holy season of Advent, when Holy Mother Church heralds the near approach of the Saviour, to penetrate deeply into His love, which He manifests in the mystery of the Incarnation.

Affections: O my Divine Saviour, how consoling and honorable for Thy holy precursor, to be the voice crying out to men to prepare the way of the Lord! Rejoicing with her whole heart, Holy Church, at Thy approaching advent, invites all her children to participate in her joy. With a tender love we will respond to her invitation, ever mindful that Thou art nigh to each one of us. Thou desirest to be near us with Thy grace and Thy peace; but how many remain at a distance, because they know Thee not, nor do they desire to know Thee. O Divine Saviour, enlighten these blinded souls, draw them unto Thee by the sweet power of Thy grace. Compel the obdurate to enter into themselves and remove the obstacles that oppose Thy bountiful advent in their hearts. True to the admonition of the Apostle, we will hasten to meet Thee with prayers, fasting, impetration and thanksgiving, to participate in Thy peace, which surpasses all comprehension.

Resolution: In order to acquire a thorough knowledge of self, I will make my daily examen with increased fervor and zeal.

Spiritual Bouquet: "There hath stood One in your midst Whom you know not."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR MONDAY

THE LIFE OF MARY, IN UNION WITH JESUS

"And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John, 14).

First Prelude: In the company of the holy angel, kneel at the feet of the Blessed Virgin and with profoundest reverence adore the Incarnate Word, dwelling in her as in a living tabernacle.

Second Prelude: O Immaculate Virgin, thou worthy sanctuary of the Divine Word, teach me how to foster union with God by acts of adoration and love, and to glorify Him by the practice of every virtue.

First Point

EFFECTS OF DIVINE GRACE IN MARY

What inexpressible delight filled the heart of the Blessed Virgin when the Saviour took up His abode in her and she was at once mother and virgin! How ardently did she thank God and extol His infinite goodness! Who could count the graces vouchsafed her at this moment? As the sun illumined and warmed the earth immediately after its creation, so Jesus enveloped the Blessed Virgin with His splendor, inflamed her with divine love and flooded her pure soul with an abundance of graces. If

the heart of man is there where his treasure is, then the heart of the Blessed Virgin could, henceforth, be in Jesus alone, because Jesus was, in very truth, her joy, her wealth, her all. Her happiness consisted solely in thinking of Jesus, in loving Him, in seeking His pleasure. She lived more for her beloved Son than for herself. Oh, how low, mean and contemptible in her eyes was the world with all its foolish pleasures, its vain concern with perishable things! How unworthy to fascinate a heart created for things eternal, which can, therefore, be satisfied by nothing save God alone.

O most blessed Virgin, admirable Mother of the Redeemer, impart to us of the light and the graces bestowed upon thee at the moment of the Incarnation, that we, too, may seek and find our happiness in Jesus alone; that we may endeavor to live in His presence and suffer ourselves to be guided solely by His love. Oh, how often do we posit our pleasure in the vain and empty things of this world! We experience no desire to converse intimately with God in the secret recesses of our heart, though He alone can make us happy. How many graces and inspirations, what spiritual consolation and merits have we forfeited by reason of our superficiality!

What vigilance do I exercise over myself? Do I not hold useless intercourse, abandon myself to vain desires and worldly pleasures? How far am I, perhaps, removed from seeking happiness in God alone!

Second Point

JESUS PERFECTS THE VIRTUES OF HIS HOLY MOTHER

After the Incarnation of the Son of God, Mary was His living tabernacle. Her love and adoration were more

pleasing to her Divine Son than those of all the angels and men combined. Mary was interiorly united with her Divine Son, and had but one heart, one soul, one life with Him. What St. Paul said of himself was true in the most perfect sense of the Blessed Virgin; she no longer lived, but her Divine Son lived in her. In her innermost soul she sought counsel with Him, begged Him to tell her what to do. To resemble Jesus was her sole ambition; to be humble, poor and mortified, meek and loving, like her Divine Son, was the object of her constant desires. Jesus continually addressed Himself to the heart of His Blessed Mother, instructed her, and Mary was ever ready to heed His injunctions.

Moved by the Divine Word, she shared with others the treasures of grace imparted to her. The Son of God urged His mother gently to cross the hills of Judea on a mission of love, to teach us thereby that Mary is our mediatrix and the dispenser of His gifts. Let us rejoice that the first act to which the Saviour incites His Blessed Mother is an act of charity. Should not her example encourage us to a like zeal? Let us beg of Jesus when He comes to us in Holy Communion to live and act in us as He lived and acted in Mary, and to incite us to the practice of every virtue, especially charity and compassion. How can we show our gratitude more effectively than by exercising the duties of our vocation with the love to which Jesus sweetly urged His Blessed Mother immediately after His Incarnation!

Affections: O ever blessed Virgin and Mother of the Redeemer, in union with all the angels, I adore the Divine Word in thy chaste womb. With still greater ardor I unite myself with thy love-inflamed heart, which far surpasses the love of the seraphim and cherubim. Oh,

impart to me of the light and grace thou didst receive from thy Divine Son at the moment of the Incarnation. Help me to know and love Him Who chose thee from all eternity for His Mother. Obtain for me, in particular, the grace to give my heart wholly to God alone, in imitation of thy example, that it may live in Him and that divine love reign supreme in my soul.

Resolution: I will endeavor to remain intimately united with God by frequent acts of love.

Spiritual Bouquet: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Prayer: O Jesus living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR TUESDAY

MARY'S THANKSGIVING: THE MAGNIFICAT

"And Mary said: 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour' " (Luke 1, 46).

First Prelude: In spirit, enter the house of Zachary and hear the Blessed Virgin's Magnificat in answer to Elizabeth, who calls her blessed.

Second Prelude: O Mary, teach us how to praise and thank God for the manifold gifts bestowed upon us.

First Point

"MY SOUL DOTH MAGNIFY THE LORD"

When Mary heard Elizabeth praise and exalt her, she could not conceal the extraordinary gifts that God had bestowed upon her. She could not do it because humility does not blind souls to the singular graces with

which they have been favored. The higher God elevates humble souls the lower they sink in their own esteem, directing all their gifts back to the Divine Giver. Mary dared not pass over in silence the graces so generously imparted to her, because she was chosen to give testimony of the great mystery that God had wrought in her. With holy exultation, she cried out, "My soul doth magnify the Lord!" Mary did not say: "My soul *hath* magnified the Lord" or "It *will* magnify Him" but "My soul doth magnify the Lord." The praise of God was her sole occupation on earth. She performed incessantly the sacred office of the angels in heaven. Her whole life was an uninterrupted "Magnificat" and she praised and exalted God not only in her words and sentiments, but in all her works.

Oh, that we would faithfully employ all our faculties, our strength, our knowledge, our vocation, for the glory of God! That we would worthily discharge our sacred duties in the exalted dignity to which God has called us! Let us strive earnestly to withdraw our soul from the sway of passions, and devote it ever more to the service of God. Filled with God, the soul will love to commune with Him and will find exquisite delight in singing His praise, for "out of the fullness of heart the mouth speaketh." As Mary, in humility and modest reserve, spoke little with men, but now that the honor and glory of God were concerned hesitated not to speak freely and explicitly, so should we, likewise, observe the greatest reserve in intercourse with men, and pour out our hearts to God alone.

Am I always grateful to God in word and deed for the many graces and benefits imparted to me? Is not useless intercourse with creatures a hindrance to my com-

muning with God in prayer and meditation and the cause of my negligence in singing His praises?

Second Point

"MY SPIRIT HATH REJOICED IN GOD, MY SAVIOUR"

The heart of Mary must have been filled with inexplicable delight when she said: "My spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour." No creature was able to treasure the benefit of the Redemption so highly as she. Filled with holy joy, she calls God her Lord and Saviour, realizing that He has in a most extraordinary manner overwhelmed her with graces. He has preserved her from original sin, and destined her to be the channel of salvation for all men. Knowing that all good things came to her through Him, she rejoices in the Saviour, Who now dwells within her bosom. Oh, my soul, arise in imitation of the example of Mary and likewise rejoice in God, your Saviour! If you desire joy then love Him, for in Him you will find all that your heart desires. For you, too, He will open heaven and in His goodness allow you to participate in the treasures of grace that He so generously dispenses through His Blessed Mother. Sad to say, there are but few who realize what constitutes true joy of heart and genuine peace of soul. The majority seek happiness in temporal goods. But who suffers himself to be fettered by the love of creatures, is not capable of loving God with all his heart, and, consequently, not receptive for the exalted, supernatural joy that God so lavishly infuses into the hearts of His faithful children. A pure, God-fearing life, the uninterrupted struggle with our evil propensities, persevering zeal in prayer and good works, are indispensable to the full enjoyment of spiritual delights. Vol-

untary venial sins and tepidity, and above all lack of humility and charity, render us unworthy of God's especial graces and favors.

Affections: O holy Virgin, blest Mother of God, thou dost not only sing the praises of the Lord with thy lips, but thy whole life, thy admirable sanctity far surpassing the sanctity of all angels and men is an uninterrupted hymn of praise, extolling the goodness of our God. I pray thee, unite my weak and feeble praise with thine and offer it to thy Divine Son, that it may become pleasing to Him. Oh, how gladly should I cry out with the Psalmist "I will be glad and rejoice in Thee; I will sing to Thy Name, O Thou most High!" (Ps. 9, 2). But, alas, my utter misery ever bears me down. O Mary, my holy Mother, look graciously upon my poverty. Let a spark of divine love inflame my poor heart, that I may always walk in the presence of God, and with devotion, praise and thanksgiving extol His mercies.

Resolutions: I will seek to make my heart receptive for God's grace, by disengaging it more and more from all earthly things.

Spiritual Bouquet: "My soul doth magnify the Lord."

Prayer: O Jesus living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR WEDNESDAY

MARY EXTOLS THE LORD FOR THE BENEFITS CONFERRED UPON ALL PEOPLES THROUGH THE INCARNATION

"And His mercy is from generation to generation unto them that fear Him. . . . He hath put down the mighty from their seat and exalted the humble" (Luke 1, 50-52).

First Prelude: Remain, in spirit, with your holy Mother in the house of Zachary, and listen attentively to the continuation of her sublime canticle.

Second Prelude: O holy Virgin, let me learn of thee childlike fear of God and humble confidence in His infinite goodness.

First Point

"HIS MERCY IS FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION TO THEM THAT FEAR HIM"

These words of the Blessed Virgin give her a new claim to her glorious title, Mother of Mercy. When praising God, she is mindful, not only of the benefits conferred upon her by His infinite goodness and of those which she is yet to receive, but she considers herself, likewise, under obligations to the Most High for the benefits bestowed on others. With our Blessed Mother, all holy souls have ever realized that the Sun of Justice not only diffuses light and warmth upon them, but that it sheds its benign rays over all the centuries. For all these graces they incessantly thank God all the more since they consider themselves the happy recipients of God's gifts to their fellow men. Their hearts are replete with holy joy in the service of so good and generous a Master.

Why does Mary say that the mercy of God will be the portion of those that fear Him? Does not fear imply discouragement and is it not more likely that God will show mercy to them that hope in Him? This is very true, but he hopes the most of God who fears Him most, and fear of God impels us to co-operate with grace. Our growth in grace, however, is proportioned to our confidence in God. Holy Scripture says: "The eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear Him" (Ecclus. 15:20).

Possessing this holy fear of God, we may confidently hope in the mercy of the Lord; we should do a great injustice were we to yield to despondence and discouragement even for a moment. Let us, therefore, walk before God with that holy fear which detests the slightest sin, which repents of past sins with humble compunction, and our childlike fear will become the solid foundation of our hope.

Do we frequently consider that, as religious, we are under obligation to thank God also for the favors He has conferred upon others? Am I intent upon avoiding the least voluntary faults?

Second Point

"HE HATH PUT DOWN THE MIGHTY FROM THEIR SEAT AND EXALTED THE HUMBLE"

Heaven and earth testify to the truth of Mary's words. God exercised might when He hurled the rebellious angels, puffed up with pride, from their heavenly thrones into the dark abyss, and elevated the deeply humbled members of the human race to the thrones vacated by the angels. The fall of King Pharao, of Saul, of the haughty Aman, and terrifying examples of all centuries, teach us the unrelenting rigor of the Lord in dealing with the proud, but also the love and predilection with which he elevates the humble and simple. Man can rise to true greatness only through humility, and only on the path of humility can he make progress in perfection. Does not perfection consist solely in our earnest endeavor to resemble Jesus? His pre-eminent virtue, however, is humility.

For this reason the spiritual writers so urgently counsel humility, again and again pointing to the fact that humility is the most essential virtue, which draws down upon us abundant graces and serves at once as a foundation for all other virtues. Let it be our earnest endeavor to become pleasing to God by repeated interior and exterior acts of humility and so to merit His blessing upon our labors. We will imitate the example of the saints, who humbled themselves profoundly before every task. Acknowledging our utter misery, our weakness, our ignorance and inconstancy before God, we will beg His grace with childlike confidence, and we, too, shall be justified in anticipating success in our undertakings.

Affections: O my Lord and my God, be it far from me ever to glory, save in Thee, the true source of all good! In Thee, O Lord, I place all my trust. Praised and blessed by Thy mercy, for having dealt with me so paternally. Do Thou always direct my way according to Thy wonderful mercies. O holy Virgin, who by thy profound humility wert so pleasing to God as to be worthy of the most exalted dignity, obtain this virtue for me, that it may aid me in securing the salvation of my soul and open to me the heavenly treasures of grace. O my Mother and my hope, through thy intercession obtain for me the grace to love thy Divine Son for all eternity.

Resolution: I will strive by repeated acts of humility to merit the grace of God upon all my actions.

Spiritual Bouquet: "He hath put down the mighty from their seat and exalted the humble."

Prayer: O Mary, my Queen . . .

MEDITATION FOR THURSDAY

CONTINUATION OF THE MAGNIFICAT

"He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away" (Luke 1, 53).

First Prelude: In spirit, remain with your holy Mother in the house of Zachary, and hear the continuation of her canticle.

Second Prelude: O holy Virgin, obtain for me a great desire for heavenly goods and grace to be generously satiated with them.

First Point

"HE HATH FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS"

With what a holy eagerness did the soul of Mary long for the advent of the Saviour, and how richly was she, in turn, replenished with every good! In His infinite goodness God will satiate all who ardently long for His graces. This is manifest in the lives of the saints. They hungered and thirsted for an increase of love, of grace, and of all virtues, with a truly fiery ardor, and God, with the utmost liberality, dispensed to them the plenitude of His gifts. Oh, that all souls were gifted with such hunger, so indispensable to perfection! Alas, there are countless lukewarm souls whose desire for perfection is weak and who shirk every exertion. Of these St. Alphonsus said: "They are ever wishing to advance but because they hesitate to apply the proper means they make no progress. Their desire is ineffective and, consequently, they have but little to hope for."

Oh, that the intensity of our desire may exercise violence over the Heart of our Divine Saviour! We will

endeavor to elicit holy desires in our souls, especially when Jesus comes to us in the Sacrament of His Love, for He gladly fills the hungry with good things. What infinite wealth is at our disposal when we receive the author of all grace in Holy Communion! All who approach His holy Tabernacle with intense hunger for this heavenly Bread shall be overwhelmed with graces; those, on the contrary, whose desire is faint shall go away empty.

Why do we not advance in love of God and of neighbor, in humility, patience, and mortification? How do we account for our coldness and indifference when approaching the holy Table? We will heed the words of the Blessed Virgin; "He hath filled the hungry with good things." If our desire for Jesus were more ardent, it would not be so with us. What will we do in the future?

Second Point

"THE RICH HE HATH SENT EMPTY AWAY"

Who are these rich whom the Lord sends away empty? Are they not primarily those who attach their hearts to temporal things, and seek only the contemptible pleasures of the world? They are, also, the proud, who, puffed up with their imaginary virtues and good qualities, are sufficient unto themselves and have no need of God and His grace. There are not a few even among those consecrated to God in the religious life who still take delight in temporal goods, sensible enjoyments and idle conversations. No spiritual joys can fall to their lot, because they seek consolation not in God but in creatures. They are earthly minded, consequently God must needs send them away empty. Attachment to external, sensible con-

solations is one of the greatest obstacles to true progress in virtue. It debars love of prayer and spiritual joy. Are not souls thus attached to be pitied? They seek consolation where it is not to be found. They suffer Jesus laden with His graces and heavenly consolations to knock in vain at the door of their heart and refuse Him admittance. Much more pitiable is the condition of those who in their pride imagine themselves rich enough in virtue. Not seldom their work done with great pains, is as so much dust scattered to the winds. They have not labored for Him; therefore, God cannot reward them, He must send them away empty. To them the words of St. John in the Apocalypse apply; "Thou sayest, 'I am rich and made wealthy, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor and blind and naked' " (Apoc. 3, 17).

Let us fear being numbered among those who have no share in the treasures of God's gifts. Let us scrutinize our heart to the very depth, to see whether there is not concealed therein a dangerous tendency or self-complacency, which we dare not even admit to ourselves.

Affections: O holy Virgin, great as thy love of God was thy longing for the heavenly treasures. Therefore, in Thee we see thy promise most wonderfully and gloriously fulfilled. Obtain for us an ardent desire for humility and love, for patience and meekness, that possessing these virtues we may be pleasing to God. Obtain for us great hunger for the Bread of Angels that Jesus may be able to satiate us with His infinite treasures. How gloriously does thy canticle continuously resound in the Church through all the centuries! Let us share thy ardent devotion, O Mary, when we pronounce thy inspired words to praise and thank God for His benefits.

Resolution: I will often excite in my heart a longing for the grace and love of God.

Spiritual Bouquet: "He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich He hath sent empty away."

Prayer: O Jesus living in Mary . . .

NOVENA IN PREPARATION FOR THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

FIRST DAY—DECEMBER 16TH

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths" (Luke 3, 4).

First Prelude: In spirit dwell upon the beautiful spectacle of a religious family preparing for the feast of the Nativity of our Lord by silence, prayer, and zeal in the exercise of virtue.

Second Prelude: O Divine Saviour, I, too, will prepare a dwelling place for thee in my heart; grant me grace and knowledge to do this in a manner pleasing to Thee.

First Point

THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING A ZEALOUS PREPARATION FOR THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY

If the season of Advent, in general, according to the wish of Holy Mother Church, should be sanctified by mortification and prayer, this is true in a special sense of the days immediately preceding the great feast of the Nativity. The better our preparation, the more graces we shall receive. It is, therefore, of great importance to know what obstacles bar the way for divine grace. We will endeavor during this novena to enter into, and examine,

ourselves as to the employment of our time, to the manner of performing our spiritual exercises, to our intercourse with others, our defects of character, self-love and self-will.

Let us test our progress from the time of our last retreat; for, if we have not progressed we have gone backward. Whatever the outcome, a serious test will call forth in us penitential sentiments and firm resolves to be more faithful in the future. It is of the utmost importance to begin at once, for no time of the year is so favorable to the practice of virtue as the holy days preceding Christmas, when Jesus, desiring to be born in us spiritually, knocks at our hearts.

If a prince wishes to honor a person with his presence, the host diligently removes whatever might give offence to the distinguished guest, and endeavors in every possible manner to please him. How solicitous should we be to offer the Divine Child an agreeable resting place in our heart! In union with all pious souls we will lovingly offer reparation to Jesus for the coldness of those who, like the Bethlehemites, suffer the Lord to knock in vain for shelter. Let us vie with one another to offer Him at His coming a pure, humble, love-inflamed heart.

Second Point

WHAT CONSTITUTES A GOOD PREPARATION?

If Jesus is to be reborn in us spiritually, we must not only banish sin, but even any attachment to sin. We must, especially avoid certain pet faults, which, despite the admonitions of our conscience, we commit so frequently. It will not suffice, however, merely to be aware of the faults themselves; we must seek to discover their sources. We

must strive to account for our lack of recollection, our sensitiveness and egotism, which so frequently cause numerous faults against charity. We must study the harm done by our pride and sensuality, which recoil from every sacrifice. As religious, we must endeavor to discover the source of our frequent transgressions of the Holy Rule, our frequent violations of silence, our remissness in obedience, which often manifests itself in disedifying objections.

Whence comes it that we, as it were, carry the burden of community life reluctantly and shift so much upon the shoulders of others? Is it not due to the fact that, failing to open the eye of faith, and losing our aim and end out of sight, we have become accustomed to a wholly natural life?

Could we not ask many a religious: Did you enter religion to satisfy your inclinations, to be guided by your fancy, to do your own will? When you entered did you not resolve to lead a hidden, poor, obedient, and mortified life in imitation of the example of Jesus? If we find this reproach applicable to us, even in only one or the other point, we know what Jesus desires of us during this holy season, when He knocks so audibly at our hearts. Can we still doubt as to what should constitute our preparation for the holy feast of Christmas?

Affections: O my God, in union with Holy Church I cry to Thee with all the ardor and longing of my soul; Purify my soul, O Lord, by the grace of Thy visitation, that my Saviour, on entering my heart, may find it well prepared! Enlighten us all by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Let us remove from our hearts all that hinders us from executing Thy commands and corresponding to Thy adorable designs. I believe I am permitted to say to Thee

with humble confidence: "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready" (Ps. 107, 2). "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth" (I Kings 3, 10). Help me to discover the secret recesses of self love and pride; let me realize to what perfection Thou hast called me and show me the best means of attaining it. O Lord, complete the preparation in my heart through the spirit of recollection and prayer that, imitating the Blessed Virgin, I may receive with a humble heart, and preserve solicitously, all the words by which Thou makest known to me Thy holy Will.

Resolution: I will frequently during the day pray the Holy Ghost to make my heart receptive for His divine inspirations.

Spiritual Bouquet: "I will hear what the Lord shall speak to my soul."

Prayer: Jesus, my Lord, my King . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE SECOND DAY—DECEMBER 17TH

"Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low" (Luke 3, 5).

First Prelude: Picture fervent religious in solitude in the presence of God, zealously examining the condition of their soul.

Second Prelude: O my God, penetrate me with a wholesome shame and lively contrition for the sins of my past life, and give me a humble and childlike confidence in Thy divine assistance.

First Point

"EVERY VALLEY SHALL BE FILLED"

Our soul is a valley, a deep abyss of weakness and imperfections, into which we must descend through the knowledge of our misery. Confiding in the infinite goodness and mercy of God, we must begin with His grace to fill out the barren and waste valley of our heart with virtues and genuine sanctity. God has called us to the religious life that we may accomplish this great task. Severed from the world, retired and detached from all earthly things, we should follow our Divine Saviour on the path of poverty, humility and renunciation. Doing this, we will in an especial manner glorify God, and draw down upon others the treasures of His mercy.

God overwhelms us with the choicest graces, offers us His guiding hand, and urges us with a holy violence to strive for sanctity. He enables us to correspond to this sublime dignity, and makes it easier for us to co-operate with His designs than for thousands of others, less favored. What possible good work could have given us a claim to the goodness of God, Who deals so mercifully with us? In preference to many others, He took us out of the sinful world, in which we were exposed to constant dangers. What must I think of myself if, in such a holy state, I live a life of continual distractions? If, instead of accumulating treasures for heaven, I lead a lukewarm life and neglect my most sacred duties?

How many valleys have I to fill out in my life! How many duties toward God, toward my neighbor and toward myself, remain unfulfilled! Oh, that I would at least acknowledge my guilt before God, and repent of it in all humility and confusion: "A contrite and humbled

heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 50, 19). Humility begets childlike confidence, which beholds in God the loving, all-powerful helper. Humility and confidence draw God's graces down upon ourselves, with which alone the emptiness of our hearts can be filled.

Let us examine earnestly in the presence of God, whether or not the knowledge of our faults leads us in reality to humility and childlike trust in Him. Have not mistrust and lack of courage often created a big void in our heart and rendered us more culpable and miserable?

Second Point

"EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL SHALL BE BROUGHT LOW"

If the grace of God is to have access to our heart and be efficacious in us, we must remove all obstacles, of which the most dangerous, no doubt, is pride. Pride prevents faith, self-knowledge, confidence and the candid avowal of our faults. Let us then, above all, bring low the mountains and hills of pride in our heart. Let us struggle against pride of heart, pride of intellect, pride in our bearing and in our whole demeanor.

Let us contemplate the Incarnate Word, infinitely abased, desiring to impress upon our heart the lesson of humility in the first moments of His earthly life, by means of His holy example. Can I any longer nourish pride in my heart when I behold my God so abased? Can it be difficult for me to humble myself for my own salvation, when Jesus so abased Himself to redeem and enrich me with heavenly gifts? But Jesus cannot impart His graces to me so long as I resist Him through pride. Whatever designs God may have, I must be convinced that He will

never accomplish anything great in me so long as I lack humility. If I aspire to any distinction, I shall be nothing; if I rejoice in being forgotten, I shall be a fit instrument in the hands of God for any undertaking. God chooses the most humble souls for His greatest purposes and elevates them to an extraordinary degree of sanctity.

He exalted the Blessed Virgin to the dignity of Mother of God. Through the instrumentality of poor, unlettered fishermen, He converted the world. What judgments did He not pronounce upon the proud and haughty, who suffered themselves to be puffed up by imaginary prerogatives! He permitted even hermits and religious to fall deeply in order to punish them for their pride. Must we not fear lest in our heart, too, pride be the true obstacle to our conversion and earnest betterment? With the grace of God we will bring low these hills of pride by sincere love of humiliation.

Affections: O Divine Saviour, teach me to understand that the best preparation for Thy coming consists in true humility. Let me endeavor with all my heart to acquire this virtue, that Thou mayest delight to take up Thy abode in my heart and pour out upon me the abundance of Thy graces. Thou alone, O my Saviour, canst give me this so necessary virtue; without Thee all my desires will vanish like vapor; without Thee my resolutions will never be executed. Turn then Thy gracious eyes upon me, O Jesus, and grant that my heart may resemble Thine in humility, meekness and amiability.

O Holy Virgin, who through thy profound humility, wast a blessed valley which drew the heavenly graces into it, obtain for us all divine light that we may recognize what we are before God and what we ought to be, according to His all-merciful designs. With Holy Church we

beg today for Divine Wisdom, which Jesus is ready again to bestow upon us in most generous measure. "O Wisdom, Who didst proceed out of the mouth of the Most High, reaching from end to end, with might and sweetness disposing all things—come and lead us on the path of humility and self-knowledge, which alone leads to eternal salvation."

Resolution: I will often entreat God for true self-knowledge and sincere contrition.

Spiritual Bouquet: "A contrite and humbled heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 50, 19).

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE THIRD DAY—DECEMBER 18TH

"The crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways plain" (Luke 3, 5).

First Prelude: In spirit dwell on the happiness and peace of religious who endeavor to direct their inclinations to God alone, and to remove from their character whatever might give offence to others.

Second Prelude: O Divine Saviour, give me the spirit of childlike simplicity and love of mortification, that I may walk before Thee in all sincerity and edify others by my good example.

First Point

"THE CROOKED SHALL BE MADE STRAIGHT"

Having asked us to fill the valleys and bring low the mountains and hills, the holy precursor exhorts us to make straight the crooked paths in our hearts. God cannot unite Himself with us unless we seek Him uprightly and

endeavor to please Him alone. All other motives for our actions are crooked paths, round-about ways, which deviate from the direct road to God and frequently mislead us altogether. But if we make God the mainspring of our actions and omissions, we shall advance to Christian perfection on the straight and secure way. If we would remain on the direct way of pure intention, we must walk always in the presence of God. The ways of the Lord are truth and justice; the ways of the world, falsehood and deception.

Let us be on our guard against these false roads and walk in simple faith, without deception, without dissembling or duplicity, seeking solely the Will of God and fearing to depart from it even in the smallest particular. Let us fulfill our duties in all simplicity, unconcerned as to the opinion or judgments of others, and abandon ourselves with perfect confidence to the all-governing, benign Providence. The amiable virtue of simplicity constitutes true happiness. Possessing it, we serve God with ease, without confusion, with the confidence and surrender of a child that fulfills the wishes of its tenderly loved father. There is no useless weighing of words, no servile fear concerning one's actions, no repeated recurring to the past—on the contrary, every duty is discharged with a certain cheerfulness and unrestraint. There is no need of craving the pleasure of creatures, for true pleasure is always found in the faithful discharge of duty and in peace and joy of heart. If our faults and weaknesses make us conscious of our inherent misery, we must humble ourselves and in all simplicity have recourse to the Heart of God, Who always receives us with love and compassion.

How foolish we have been so often in the past to seek our pleasure in thousand vain and useless external

things, whereas we could so easily have found it in our interior! Was not our lack of simplicity, our desire to please creatures, to satisfy self-love the source of many faults and continual unrest?

Second Point

"THE ROUGH SHALL BE MADE PLAIN"

With these words St. John exhorts us to correct our imperfections and whatever is repulsive and offensive in our disposition. How many irregularities there are in our character, in our conduct, in our intercourse with others! How crude, harsh and uncharitable are we? There is so much to be made smooth, plain and straight; we must become meek and benevolent toward all, and in everything, if we desire to prepare the way of the Lord in our hearts. This preparation will exact of us many a sacrifice and much violence, for without combat and exertion, no one can overcome his faults, nor acquire the virtues which God demands of him.

Is it not fear of making the sacrifice that deters us from bettering our lives? We were most sincere when on certain days especially during the annual retreat, urged by grace, we formulated our plan for a holy life, and made the resolve to banish from our heart whatever might disquiet our conscience. What has paralyzed our good will and made us waver in our holy resolves? Was it not chiefly the fear of sacrifices? Do not our faults displease us, being in direct contradiction to the many graces and enlightenments God gives us? Must not this thought cause us to blush for shame? We even grow terrified at the thought of eternity and fear that we shall have to suffer a long time in the flames of purgatory to satisfy

Divine Justice. Our many faults may even jeopardize our eternal salvation. In order to render our final account easier for us, we must be more watchful, more energetic, must persevere in the struggle, though it may seem hard; otherwise, we shall continue in our faults until they gain more and more power over us. God wills our sanctification through the combat of our faults and weaknesses of character. Do we not see how the saints distinguished themselves especially in those virtues that were most opposed to their temperamental defects? Never would St. Francis de Sales have come to be so excellent a copy of the meekness of Jesus, if he had not heroically combated his irritability; nor would St. Francis Xavier have achieved so much for the honor of God, had he not unmercifully prosecuted egotism. We must sanctify ourselves in the same manner as did the saints. Though God offers us the necessary grace for sanctification of self, we shall advance in perfection only in so far as we correspond to divine grace—as our spirit of self-immolation resembles that of the saints.

Affections: O my God, enlightened by Thy grace, what weakness do I detect in myself, what bitterness and harshness in my character! How insincere and perverse is my will! O Lord, give me with this knowledge of self also the strength to remove all these hindrances from my heart. This, however, cannot be done without the true spirit of immolation, without mortification and self-denial. Oh, give me these so necessary virtues, that I may practice them on all occasions and thus experience that Thy yoke is sweet and Thy burden light. Give me that sincerity and uprightness of mind, which characterizes Thy true children, and which I should strive pre-eminently to acquire in my holy state. O holy Virgin, Mother of

God, send the fire of thy love into my heart, warm it and complete its purification by thy powerful intercession, that our Emmanuel, when thou wilt give Him to us, shall find no obstacle to His entrance into our hearts. With what love and eagerness do we not anticipate His coming! "O Adonai, Thou Leader of the House of Israel, Who didst appear to Moses in the burning bush, and gavest him Thy law on Mt. Sinai, come and stretch out Thy arm to redeem us."

Resolution: Today I will often implore God for a sincere, righteous and self-immolating heart.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. 50, 12).

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FOURTH DAY—DECEMBER 19TH

"Prepare ye the Way of the Lord" (Luke 3, 4).

First Prelude: Hear Holy Church ever anew admonishing the faithful, and picture her good children redoubling their zeal in their preparation the nearer they approach to the day of Christ's advent.

Second Prelude: O Lord, let me recognize my great need of Thy assistance, that by interior recollection and fervor in prayer I may endeavor, with all my strength, to draw down upon myself Thy graces and blessings.

First Point

PRAYER, A NECESSARY MEANS OF PARTICIPATION IN GOD'S GRACES

Realizing what obstacles still obstruct the way for our Divine Saviour, have we not sufficient reason for discour-

agement on account of the enormity of the task before us, especially when we consider our weakness and utter misery? Experience has only too clearly proved that of our own strength we cannot for one moment resist evil and do good. Realizing the full malice of perverted nature, is it not natural that we turn to God in fervent prayer, Who is powerful of Himself to release us from so deplorable a condition? Therefore, we cry to Him for grace and mercy: O Divine Word, direct my footsteps! Come, O Sun of Justice, by Thy light and warmth, vivify those who sit in the shadow of death! O Saviour of the world, come and redeem us!

No time is more appropriate for prayer than the time of preparation for Christmas. We will, therefore, unite ourselves with our dear Saviour, Who, as our High Priest, persevered in constant prayer before His birth. Oh, how ardent were His entreaties as He pleaded for the whole world with the Father! At that time, He prayed for each one of us; our momentary needs were before Him and even then He commended them to His heavenly Father. With what confidence must not this thought inspire us! God Himself prayed for me; how could such a prayer remain ineffectual! It depends upon me alone whether or not I shall partake of the bountiful fruits of this prayer which will flow to me in abundance, provided I desire them ardently and persevere in prayer. Is not this my duty, and in consideration of my misery, a dire necessity, though, at the same time, a mystery of peace and happiness?

Our needs are so great and manifold that we can ill afford to cease praying, no more than the poor can desist begging for alms. There is, further, no nobler nor sweeter occupation for us than communion with God; a

life of prayer will make a paradise of this place of exile, will give us a foretaste of heaven. No matter how great the difficulties that we experience in prayer, we will persevere courageously and use violence to acquire a good so necessary and so conducive to our happiness. We will often call to mind the promise of Christ "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name that will I do" (John 14, 13).

Second Point

SILENCE AND RECOLLECTION AID US TO ACQUIRE THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

The nearer the great day approaches, the more diligently must we guard our hearts against distractions, that we may the oftener ponder the mystery of the infinite love of God in the Incarnation. Let us recall the good resolutions with which we desire to rejoice the heart of our Blessed Saviour. If by means of recollection we succeed in banishing all unnecessary cares and solicitude, then we shall be able to offer an acceptable dwelling place to the Infant Saviour. But we shall never acquire recollection of spirit and interior silence unless we carefully avoid every unnecessary word, for exterior silence cuts off all superfluous thoughts and desires. It is the custodian of the heart, and the faithful and persevering exercise of it fosters the spirit of prayer.

How solicitously should we, therefore, observe silence! Is it not meet for souls consecrated to God in the religious state, espoused to Jesus, to immolate to Him all the affections and inclinations of their hearts, all the faculties of their souls? Like the angels, who while beholding the Beatific Vision, hasten whither their office calls them, and bear heaven withersoever they go, silent souls remain

constantly in the heaven of interior solitude, occupying themselves with God's perfections, Whom they behold uninterruptedly in prayer and recollection, and give Him love for love, as a child its father. Religious, who so frequently receive their Saviour in Holy Communion, find Him like Mary in the tabernacle of their heart, there to praise Him every hour, to live for Him and to cherish affectionate intercourse with Him.

Oh, what holy desires animate souls thus intimately united with God! In union with Mary and Joseph and all pious souls, they offer to the Christ-Child in the manger the oblation of most ardent love.

Let us incessantly entreat the Holy Spirit to form and mold that tender piety in our hearts which will give our life and our efforts to acquire virtue the correct and proper trend. All depends upon our acquiring the spirit of prayer, even at the cost of a hard struggle, for through it we not only receive grace to combat our faults, but acquire the necessary strength for the practice of virtue. Above all let us be faithful in the observance of silence, the ornament and mainstay of religious life, and remove from our minds what might hinder our intercourse with God, that Jesus, who loves to impart the plenitude of His grace to interior and silent souls, will find our hearts well disposed at His advent.

Affections: O Divine Saviour Whose infinite sanctity becomes more and more manifest to us in meditation, we realize how zealously we must cleanse ourselves of our faults. Thy ineffable clemency has called us to intimate union with Thee even in this life, and one day to behold Thee face to face in heaven. Oh, render us worthy of such a sublime calling; Thou alone canst do it by Thy all-powerful grace. We entreat Thee, by the ever blessed

Virgin Mary who gave Thee, the Source and Author of all graces, to the world. Through Mary and in union with her, we dare to approach Thee and pray with all the ardor of our souls; "O Thou Root of Jesse, Who art a signal to the people in whose presence the Kings are silent, and unto whom the nations cry 'Come and deliver us now and delay no longer.' "

Resolution: I will prepare for the advent of the Lord by silence and fervent prayer.

Spiritual Bouquet: "The Lord is nigh" (Ps. 44, 19).

Prayer: Jesus, my Lord, my King . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FIFTH DAY—DECEMBER 20TH

"And the Light shineth in darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it . . . He came unto His own and His own received Him not" (John 1, 5).

First Prelude: Behold our Divine Saviour, according to St. John in the Apocalypse, knocking at the door of our hearts and asking for admittance.

Second Prelude: O my beloved Saviour, let me be of the number of those who give Thee their whole heart, and in whom Thou canst take up Thy permanent abode.

First Point

IN WHAT SOULS JESUS DOES NOT TAKE UP HIS PERMANENT ABODE

Though our Blessed Lord desires ardently to dwell in our hearts, but few know how to secure His presence permanently. Divine grace is not imparted to all in like

measure. This measure is determined by the receptiveness and the various needs of each soul. Does not the Lord dispense His gifts as He in His infinite wisdom sees fit? In many souls, however, Jesus cannot take up a lasting abode. They have, indeed, turned to Him with a contrite heart, but soon they relapse into their former sins, as though they had never repented of them. How our Lord should love to bestow spiritual gifts abundantly on all if they would only lay greater stress upon prayer, mortification, and self-denial!

Living, as we do, in voluntary distractions, yielding to sensual delights, dare we express astonishment at our spiritual dryness, at aridity in meditation or tepidity at Mass and Holy Communion? Perhaps we commit no grave faults, but are we not frequently guilty of minor transgressions, which darken our mind and rob us of delight in heavenly things? How great is such ingratitude toward the infinite goodness of God! He would dwell in our hearts, but we think not of Him; He would enrich us, but we are indifferent to His treasures; He would speak to us but we heed Him not; He would draw us unto Himself, but we elude His sweet attractions. Are not in such souls the words of St. John verified; "He came unto His own and His own received Him not" (John 1, 11)?

O soul, that cravest a few paltry alms from creatures, a few delights which cannot satisfy you, how happy, how wealthy could you be if you truly loved God! What peace should be yours were you to live for Him! Have you not yet experienced the truth of St. Augustine's words: "Thou hast created our heart for Thee, O Lord; it cannot rest till it rest in Thee?"

Am I solicitous to prepare an agreeable and lasting

dwelling place for our dear Lord? Have not my voluntary distractions and infidelities, the desire to see and be seen, often forced my good Jesus to withdraw from me, or at least hindered Him from imparting His graces to me generously?

Second Point

WE FIND AND PRESERVE THE LORD IN SOLITUDE

The Lord desires to dwell in us mystically. The prophet Isaias has said of Him: "Verily, Thou art a hidden God" (45, 15), and St. Augustine assures us that he foolishly sought the Lord without, while He dwelt within his soul. If we would find the Saviour we must love seclusion and retirement, for who would find what is hidden must seek it in seclusion. Animated by a living and ardent love, we must retire into the secret chamber of our heart, close the doors of our senses and seek God in all sincerity through faith and love.

To souls that are guided by the principles of faith, love discloses what faith conceals. They feel an ardent desire to serve God, to labor for Him, to regain lost time, and to repair all former omissions and transgressions. Exercising themselves in the accomplishment of all the good to which grace inspires them, they acquire, more and more, the spirit of true zeal. Oh, that this heavenly fire would consume all worldly affections, all attachment to vain, earthly gratifications, and transform our heart into a well-garnished sanctuary of the Lord! O happy souls in whom the presence of the good God is so powerfully manifest! Such souls constantly feel themselves drawn to Him by fervent aspirations and intense desires! Possessing God in the depths of their heart inasmuch as

this is possible here below, they are convinced of His most tender love, and neither life nor death shall be able to sever them from Him.

O blessed solitude, O hidden treasure of religious life! Far from the tumult of the world, far from creatures and distractions, religious souls fathom ever more the infinite affability of their Creator and become impregnated with His love. To them the words of the Saviour apply: "I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard of My Father, I have made known to you" (John 15, 16). They taste the delights of sweet converse with God, and like the saints are never less alone than when in solitude, far from creatures, they commune with God.

Affections: What happiness, O Lord, to hear Thy voice "Behold, I stand at the gate and knock" (Apoc. 3, 20). Lord, Thou wilt enter my heart! Oh, what an inexpressible grace for me! In Thy ineffable goodness Thou hast overlooked all my defects and shortcomings. Though I love Thee, Lord, and strive for virtue, I must fear Thou wilt find nothing in my heart that will please Thee. Oh, may Thy almighty grace inflame my poor, cold heart with the fire of holy love, so that in future it may belong wholly to Thee, that Thou canst possess it and rule it according to Thy good pleasure. O Mary, Mother of God, who wast so intimately united with Him, Whom heaven and earth cannot contain, prepare our hearts, that thou mayest be able to deposit thy Son therein with joy and pleasure, when He deigns to visit us in Holy Communion. With all the faithful of Holy Church we cry: "O Key of David and Sceptre of the house of Israel, who openest and no man shutteth; who shuttest and no man openeth; come and take out of prison him who is

in fetters, and who sitteth in darkness and in the shadow of death."

Resolution: I will frequently retire into my heart in the course of the day, and in silence hold communion with my Saviour.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Behold, I stand at the gate and knock."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE SIXTH DAY—DECEMBER 21ST

FEAST OF ST. THOMAS, APOSTLE

"Peace be to you! Then He said to Thomas: 'Put in thy finger hither and see My hands; and bring hither thy hand and put it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing,' Thomas answered and said to Him: 'My Lord and my God!' " (John 20, 26-28).

First Prelude: Behold St. Thomas in an ecstasy of joy and amazement at sight of his beloved Master.

Second Prelude: O my Saviour, imbue me with a lively faith and ardent love, that I may work efficaciously at the sanctification of self.

First Point

ST. THOMAS, THE EXAMPLE OF A LIVING FAITH

In her admirable wisdom, Holy Mother Church commemorates the feast of St. Thomas in close proximity to the feast of the Nativity. The faith of this Apostle in His Lord and God once wavered; now, Mother Church invites her children to approach the manger of the Christ Child strengthened by the living faith that animated

the soul of Thomas after Christ had touched his heart. Our Lord permitted the doubt of the Apostle that, until the end of time, the once doubting Thomas might obtain for us the grace of humble submission of our understanding, that we might recognize in the Infant Jesus Him for Whom the nations wait. The words of our Lord to Thomas: "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed" (John 20, 29) are applicable to us. Do we not desire such simple, submissive faith? Assuredly, we long for God to aid our weakness that we may feel the effects of His bountiful presence and in all humility greet the little Child in the manger as our Lord and God.

The saints call this living faith the door through which Christ enters our hearts, to dwell therein. Jesus delights to be where faith reigns, for He would enrich us with a living faith, to make our heart His tabernacle and throne. Through the presence of Jesus in His elect, He becomes their light, their strength, and their joy. Such faith qualified St. Thomas for his arduous missionary labors, gave him strength and grace to banish ignorance from countless hearts, and by his teaching, to inculcate the doctrine of Jesus Christ, his Lord and God. Such is the power of faith, which makes us strong in Christ, Jesus, and imbues us with a heavenly life, hidden with Christ in God.

What profit will accrue to us in virtue of a lively faith if, in its light, we study the mysteries of our holy religion and regulate our life accordingly! Behold, our God offers Himself in inexpressible abasement and profound humiliation, for love of us! He longs not only to suffer pain and contempt but even to die the most ignominious death on the cross. This sacred truth, pondered in the light of faith, will render all things sweet and desirable. How full of consolation the inspired

words: "If we suffer with Him we shall also be glorified with Him" (Rom. 8, 17).

Second Point

ST. THOMAS, THE EXAMPLE OF A TENDER AND ARDENT LOVE FOR JESUS

St. Thomas had laid his hand in the side of Jesus and touched the furnace of love, whose flames instantly transmitted themselves to his heart in such measure that, falling on his knees and overcome by love, he exclaimed: "My Lord and my God!" The divine fire of love never again died out in him. It grew constantly, accompanied him on all his apostolic journeys, even in his labors among the pagans, strengthened him in all sufferings and led him, finally, to a glorious martyrdom.

Oh, that we had the smallest particle of the fire that burned in the heart of the Apostle! With what fervor should we then approach Jesus and with what ardor and longing, transform our hearts into His favorite abode! Let us at least endeavor to love God as much as is within our power. We know not whether God has decreed us many years more, or whether He will, perhaps, call us soon. We know, however, that with the measure with which we mete out it shall be measured back to us. The measure of our love of God here below will be the measure of our love in heaven. Oh, how strong should the fire of divine love burn in our hearts even now, if we used every opportunity to nourish it! Thanks to the goodness of God, it is not too late. It is still possible for us to attain to a high degree of divine love, which grows rapidly, if sought perseveringly.

Let us be zealous in exciting acts of love and beg Jesus when He gives Himself to us wholly in the Sacrament of His Love, to bestow His love on us, as He did on St. Thomas. But let us also gladly make the sacrifices which the unbloody martyrdom of religious life demands of us, day by day, and prove our love to Jesus by our deeds.

Affections: O glorious Apostle, St. Thomas, who hast led so great a number of infidel nations to Christ, we pray thee guide us to the manger of our Emmanuel, Who will manifest Himself to His Church in a few days. In order to appear worthily in His holy presence, we stand in need of heavenly light, and a living faith. Obtain it for us, O holy Apostle, together with that ardent love which thou didst draw from the Heart of the Saviour. We, too, wish to be of the number of those who, not seeing, still believe; we long to prostrate ourselves before the new-born Saviour, and lovingly to cry out in all humility: "My Lord and my God!" Pray also, O glorious Apostle, for all missionaries, who are thy successors, that the Sun of Justice may anew enlighten the countries moistened and fructified with thy blood. Therefore, we pray today, with the universal Church: "O Orient, Brightness of Eternal Light, King of Glory, come and enlighten those that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death."

Resolution: I will strive to be recollected in God today, and frequently excite acts of faith and love.

Spiritual Bouquet: "My Lord and my God!"

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE SEVENTH DAY, DECEMBER 22ND

"And thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, art little among the thousands of Juda: out of thee shall He come that is to be the ruler of Israel" (Mich. 5, 2).

First Prelude: Picture the insignificant city of Bethlehem, which the Saviour chose for His birthplace.

Second Prelude: O my Jesus, Thou true Bread of Life, give me grace to make preparations becoming the worthy reception of Thy Divine Majesty, that I may participate in the glorious fruits of union with Thee.

First Point

BETHLEHEM SIGNIFIES "HOUSE OF BREAD"

From Bethlehem the mysterious Bread was to come which should save the world from starvation and impart new life to all peoples. Of old, the city had been called "Ephrata" that is, "fruitful" because it had been destined in the divine plan of Eternal Wisdom to give to mankind the most precious fruit, the Saviour of the world.

The surrounding country was especially rich in cereals and wine. Here, even in His very Birth, Jesus willed to foreshadow the Sacrament of His Love in which, beneath the species of bread and wine, He wills to nourish His elect. David, who prefigured the Messiah, was also born in Bethlehem; on these blessed plains, he tended his father's sheep. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, the true King of Israel, pastures his lambkins on the fertile plains of Holy Church.

Oh, the adorable designs of the infinite wisdom of God! In all the dispositions of Divine Providence, do we not behold the most tender love for us, His creatures?

One glance into our own lives proves this beyond doubt. What we deemed insignificant, was ordained by God's all-wise decree to lead us to our eternal destiny. Oh, how shall we one day adore the inscrutable ways of God and reverently thank Him for all that His paternal Heart has done for us!

Let us then abandon ourselves confidently to the direction of the all-wise and omnipotent God, Who with inexpressible mildness guides the destinies of the weak.

Second Point

JESUS THE TRUE BREAD OF LIFE

In infinite love, Jesus has given Himself under the form of bread and wine to be the food of our souls. Oh, the ineffable wisdom of Jesus, to conceal His Sacred Body and Blood under the form of bread in the Sacrament of His Love! Bread constitutes the chief food of man, can be easily procured and never excites disgust. O blessed Bread, heavenly Food, which contains in itself all sweetness! The worthy reception of this Bread of Life produces in our souls all the effects that earthly bread produces in the body. It preserves, strengthens, invigorates, refreshes, and delights the soul. This is, verily, the bread of love, which is more indispensable to the soul than earthly bread to the body. Sad to say, many are more solicitous to preserve bodily life than to secure an increase of grace and their salvation. What sacrifices are not made cheerfully when there is even the faintest hope of thereby lengthening one's earthly life only a few years!

Though the bread the Saviour gives is the pledge of everlasting life, of future glory, still the majority of men

make little or no effort to partake of this bread. Had Jesus deposited in Holy Communion the power to lengthen this mortal life for only a hundred years, how eagerly should all these lukewarm and indifferent Christians hasten to the Table of the Lord! Oh! the blindness of these poor creatures buried in earthly concerns!

Oh, that we at least should in some measure comprehend the infinite love of Jesus! We should then approach His Table with a holy eagerness and gladly impose some sacrifices upon ourselves, that we may receive this heavenly Food worthily and that it may preserve us to life everlasting. During this holy season, we will examine ourselves as to our preparation for Holy Communion, and renew ourselves in this all-important action.

Affections: O my Jesus, Thou didst not despise the little town of Bethlehem, but didst choose it for Thy birthplace. Thou dost, likewise, not disdain to take up Thy abode in a poor unworthy heart, provided it is free from sin and adorned with virtues. I realize full well how much there is yet lacking before I can truly say that my heart is a worthy resting place for Thee. To whom shall I have recourse in my poverty and need but to Thee, O Jesus, Thou truly Good Shepherd of my soul, Who dost so lovingly invite the burdened and the heavily laden, in order to refresh them? Thou gavest me all when Thou gavest Thyself in this Sacrament of Love. I, too, offer myself entirely to Thee, with all that I have and am. Oh, grant that through Thy all-powerful grace, I may remain most intimately united with Thee in life and in death! With the universal Church, we cry to Thee today: "O King of the Gentiles and their desired one, the cornerstone that joinest two walls; come and save man, whom Thou didst form out of slime."

Resolution: By fervor in the practice of virtue, I will strive to prepare my heart ever better for Holy Communion.

Spiritual Bouquet: "I am the living Bread; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE EIGHTH DAY, DECEMBER 23RD

"And it came to pass that in those days there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrolling was first made by Cyrinus, governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem: Because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his espoused wife, who was with child. And it came to pass that when they were there, her days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son, and she wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2, 1, 7).

First Prelude: Behold Mary and Joseph on the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem—hosts of angels accompanying them.

Second Prelude: Grant, O Divine Saviour, that the nearer I approach to the great day of Thy bountiful Nativity, I may excite a more ardent desire and prepare my heart with greater zeal for Thy advent by the practice of virtue and fidelity to my vows.

First Point

MARY AND JOSEPH GO TO BETHLEHEM

The heavenly Father willed that His well-beloved Son should be born in poverty and lowliness. He, therefore, ordained that Caesar Augustus issue an edict, in consequence of which, Mary and Joseph should go to Bethlehem. This apparent necessity served but to cover our Blessed Lord's desire to suffer, His humility, His patience and His love of holy poverty. Such love He infused into the heart of His holy Mother, who, though poor, had to undertake a long journey despite the inclemency of the season, and to suffer many hardships. But she endured all with patience, even with cheerfulness for her heart was occupied solely with her Divine Saviour, her only treasure. At times she interrupted her silence to converse with St. Joseph, but it was only to speak of divine things. Difficult and precarious as their journey was, nevertheless, the thought of their Divine Child made them esteem all sufferings as naught.

Oh, that we would imitate the wonderful example of the Holy Family on this journey! Jesus willed to be born not in Nazareth, but in the course of a journey, to teach us that we have no lasting abode here below, that we must seek our home in heaven and detach our heart from all earthly affections. Mary and Joseph teach us how to keep Jesus, our sole Good and highest Treasure, and for love of Him gladly to leave all else. Well may they have felt keenly the privations attendant upon their sojourn in a strange place especially for the Divine Child! But they divined the ineffable designs of God and realized that nothing less than total detachment and absolute contempt of all earthly things was worthy of their God.

Do I seek nothing in this world but to resemble my Divine Model? Do I often call to mind that I am a stranger on earth and that my home is in heaven? Does my zeal in the observance of poverty mark me as a worthy child of the Holy Family?

Second Point

MARY AND JOSEPH FIND NO SHELTER

The gospel tells us that Mary and Joseph found no room in the inns. Enjoying their comfortable homes, the wealthy of Bethlehem suffered the Son of God and Saviour of the world to seek in vain for shelter in His own city and family. Oh, if the inhabitants had known the strangers, if they had known that there was a question of giving shelter to the long-expected Messiah, with what reverence and exquisite joy would they have welcomed Mary and Joseph to their hearths!

The painful mystery of Bethlehem is still recurring in our day. Jesus finds shelter in only a few hearts, because so few wish to receive Him. He is the Lord and Master of the whole world, and yet with His Mother and St. Joseph He must seek refuge in a poor stable. Like a weary traveler, Jesus even now incessantly knocks at the door of our heart saying: Open to Me, My beloved, open to Me and admit no stranger; open to My love, empty your heart and expand it, I will replenish it. I have traversed the whole world and found naught but refusals and insults; do you open to Me that I may enter and find recompense with you for the coldness of men.

Oh, let us rejoice that the Saviour will come and dwell in our hearts! Let us reserve for Him not only the best place, but our whole heart; for though He despised

neither the stable nor the manger, He will disdain to enter a divided heart. Let us also rejoice in the happiness furnished us in our holy vocation of harboring and serving the Saviour, Himself, in the person of the children and the poor according to the promise of Jesus: "What you have done to the least of My brethren, you have done unto Me" (Math. 25, 45), and "He that shall receive one such little child in My name receiveth Me" (Math. 18, 5).

Affections: What a sublime example of virtue dost Thou set me in Thy journey to Bethlehem, O Virgin Mother of my Saviour, and thou, her purest bridegroom, St. Joseph! What humility and obedience do I admire in you! Ye have truly imbibed the spirit of Jesus; love of poverty and seclusion has captivated your hearts. Oh, let me hasten to Bethlehem in your holy company, to behold the wonders of the Most High! Let me share your ardent love, your fervor. Divine Saviour, behold we are preparing for Thy gracious advent. Thou shalt not first knock at the door of our hearts to beg admittance; no, we entreat Thee, come into our hearts, watching and expecting we stand at the door until Thou comest! Oh, yes, come soon that Thou mayest no longer be our Emmanuel, but also our Jesus, our Saviour. With all the ardor of our soul, we cry to Thee: "O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, the expectation of the Gentiles, and their Saviour, come and save us, O Lord our God."

Resolution: I will often today be mindful of the presence of God, and by numerous acts of humility, meekness and patience prepare a worthy resting place in my heart for my Divine Saviour.

Spiritual Bouquet: "They found no room in the inn."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE NINTH DAY
DECEMBER 24TH

"Sanctify yourselves today and be prepared; for tomorrow you shall see the glory of the Lord become manifest" (Office of Holy Church).

First Prelude: In spirit, enter the cave in which the Saviour of the world is to be born. See the Virgin Mother, in profoundest recollection and fervent prayer awaiting the birth of her Divine Child. St. Joseph is kneeling apart, likewise silently wrapped in prayer.

Second Prelude: O my holy Mother, impart to me thy sentiments that I may worthily approach the manger of my Divine Saviour on this holy night, and fervently renew the immolation of my vows to our new-born King.

First Point

THE BLESSED VIRGIN PREPARES FOR THE BIRTH OF THE SAVIOUR

Consider how ardently the Blessed Virgin longed for the moment of the birth of her Divine Child! Her intimate union with the Lord and God of her heart, her desire to see and adore Him visibly in the flesh, her ardor to present her treasure to the world for the salvation of mankind, made her heart burn so vehemently that she could hardly suppress the fire of love. How lively was her faith, how firm and full of confidence her hope, how well prepared her heart! Obedience had led her into the lowly stable, and she deemed herself happy in being permitted to share such extreme poverty with the Lord of heaven and earth.

Oh, that it were vouchsafed us to take one glance into this pure, spotless heart, which from the first moment of its existence throbbed with love for God! Oh, that a spark of this love should transform our heart into a delightful abode for our dear Saviour, Who will soon enter it in Holy Communion! We will endeavor as far possible to make Mary's sentiments our own, and rejoice in the thought that our dear Mother was the first who offered the Infant Saviour the gifts of poverty, chastity, obedience and holy love. It must be for us a source of joy still to find Mary at the crib, and thus to be able to unite our sacrifice with hers. Oh, the joy we give our Blessed Mother, St. Joseph and the holy angels by renewing our holy vows, and, as it were, uniting with them to tender the homage of our adoration to the new-born Saviour! Let us beg them to replenish our heart with holy affections, pious desires, and fervent resolutions, that Christ, at His advent, may find us worthy of the graces we need to carry out our renewed promises with unswerving fidelity.

SECOND POINT

OUR GIFTS TO THE INFANT SAVIOUR

How lovely has the Holy Ghost disposed the interchange of gifts with the Infant Saviour on the beautiful feast of Christmas! What a blessed exchange! Our Saviour gives us Himself, wholly, and we, too, give ourselves wholly to Him. After He has inundated our soul with graces during this novena, reanimated us, opened our eyes and filled our hearts with holy joy, we dare approach Him to renew the vows that we once made in the blessed hour of our profession. Let us remember that the renewal of our offering is no less pleasing to Jesus than

was our first consecration; on the contrary, we manifest even greater fidelity and more ardent love today by the fervent renewing of our holy vows.

When we consecrated ourselves to God at the foot of the altar on the day of our profession we had but a faint knowledge of our obligations as religious. We simply followed the call of God and surrendered ourselves unreservedly to Him with lively faith and tender love. Now that we understand more fully the import of the sacrifice we made to God by pronouncing our holy vows, we honor Him in a greater degree by the renewal of these sacred promises, and our repeated cheerful oblations give glorious testimony that His yoke is sweet and His burden light.

Let us confidently approach our Divine Saviour, our beloved Bridegroom, in the Sacrament of His Love, and in spirit review all the proofs of His special love to the present moment. Let us revert to the day of our profession, to the day of our entrance into religion, to the days of youth, and even childhood; yes, let us look even into the ocean of eternity. When God, of old made the world, He thought of each one of us, foresaw our trials, our sacrifices and sufferings, and disposed all with infinite love for our salvation. The love of Jesus is immutable, immeasurable and incomprehensible. Must we not exclaim: "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?" (Ps. 115). And if, in turn, we requite such love with faithlessness, cowardice and tepidity, must not a feeling of deep shame and confusion come over us? Must we not realize how degrading it is to take back the smallest particle of the oblation once made to the Lord?

Far be it from us to act thus. With absolute fidelity, we will anew vow poverty, for which Jesus promises us

the infinite treasures of His Sacred Heart; we will vow obedience, for which He gives us His benign Providence, we will offer Him our virginal love in exchange for His eternal, unchangeable love. Oh, blessed moment of the renewal of our vows! Only a few more hours and we shall kneel at the foot of the altar as on the day of our profession to receive the new-born Saviour of the world. Oh, that the love which fills our hearts might burst into flames! Let us seek to increase it by recollection, by fervent aspirations and hidden sacrifices, that our heavenly Bridegroom may receive us with joy, and most generously impart to us the best Christmas gift—His inexpressible peace.

Affections: O my Jesus, Divine Bridegroom of my soul, with tender love I desire anew on this Holy Night to lay at Thy sacred feet, the sacrifice of my holy vows. I immolate myself as cheerfully and whole-heartedly as I did on the ever-memorable day, when Thou gavest me the right to call myself Thy spouse. With Thy grace I resolve to keep my vows more faithfully than heretofore, to strive for the highest perfection. Yes, my Jesus, my oblation must be perfect; I will seek nothing, love nothing, save Thee alone. I will renounce all, so that my heart may taste of the full wealth of Thy poverty. My vow of obedience, by which I renew the immolation of my whole being, shall augment my happiness. Oh, that animated by Thy spirit, I would win many souls to Thee by the faithful discharge of the duties of my holy calling! O Divine Child, with all the ardor of my soul I cry to Thee: make me like to Thee; let me become as a child in dependence, in poverty, in innocence, a child ever worthy of Thy love and of the solicitude of Thy virginal Mother! O Mary and Joseph, ye first adorers of the Saviour, lead

me to Him and offer Him the sacrifice of my love, that He may accept it with pleasure and may draw the bonds that unite me with Him ever closer, that full of genuine, heartfelt joy I may sing with the angels: "Glory to God in the highest!"

Resolution: I will beg the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph and the holy angels to imbue me with holy sentiments and assist me in the preparation for the reception of my dear Lord and Saviour.

Spiritual Bouquet: "The Lord is nigh! Rejoice and be glad!"

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY

THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

"And it came to pass that when they were there, her days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger; because there was not any room for them in the inn" (Luke 2, 6-7).

First Prelude: Behold the uncomfortable, poor, and unworthy cave in which Mary and Joseph are forced to seek shelter. It is midnight and profound silence reigns about.

Second Prelude: O Divine Saviour, I will contemplate Thy birth; let me realize this mystery of Thy love, that I may love Thee more ardently and follow Thee more perfectly.

First Point

THE NEW-BORN SAVIOUR

"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people" (Luke 2, 10), said the angel to the shepherds, announcing the birth of the Saviour. What a vast field for contemplation! There lies a true Child of man, Who is at the same time the Son of God. He appears weak and helpless, and yet, He is the Eternal Word of Whom it is written: "In the beginning was the Word" (John I, 1). This Child is small—so small that the narrow crib gives Him sufficient room; but this little Child is at the same time the immeasurable, omnipresent God, Who fills heaven and earth. How poor is this Child, and still, this poor Child is the King of kings, of Whose empire there shall be no end, Who distributes the treasures of heaven and earth according to His good pleasure. The almighty, eternal God, to Whose power everything is subject, has abased Himself and become a weak Child. What does all this signify? What drew the supreme Lord into the lowly stable, into the crib? Why has He humbled Himself so profoundly, abased Himself so completely? It was done out of love for you, to draw your heart to His, to excite you to return love for love. Let us penetrate with the eye of faith, the tiny yet magnanimous Heart of this Child, our God. What fiery ardor do we behold therein! What is all the love of the seraphim compared with a spark of the love that burns in the Heart of this little Child for us poor sinners!

Behold, my soul, how the heart of the Christ-Child burns with love for you. Will you not finally begin to love Jesus, Who has so loved you? Love Him with all

your heart. Offer Him today the hospitality of your heart and beg of Him that His tiny, love-inflamed Heart may inflame yours. O Mary and Joseph, give me of the fire of your love, that I may celebrate this mystery in a worthy manner and with the angels join in the hymn of praise: "Glory to God in the highest!" Oh, what blessedness to be at the crib of the Saviour and realize the truth of the words: "I bring you tidings of great joy!" As religious, I have especial reasons for rejoicing at the crib of the new-born Saviour, for here He laid the foundation of religious life. Here He reveals to us the most perfect poverty, the most humble obedience, the most ardent charity;—here we find infinite purity and sanctity, and here it is that He wills to impart to us grace to follow Him steadfastly on the path of the evangelical counsels. In spirit let us hasten to the crib of Bethlehem, there to renew our holy vows, and to offer ourselves as an oblation to the Infant Saviour. Then the peace which the angels announced will fill our hearts and we shall partake in the fullest measure of the graces and blessing which the Infant Saviour so gladly bestows on well-prepared hearts.

Second Point

THE FIRST ADORERS OF THE SAVIOUR

There we find, first of all, the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of the new-born Saviour. Who can comprehend what passed in the heart of Mary, when for the first time she saw before her the Divine Child! She took Him into her blessed arms, offered Him as oblation to the Heavenly Father and presented Him to the blessed spirits for veneration. Her hands were the consecrated altar upon

which, at His entrance into the world, He Who is the propitiation for our sins, immolated Himself. It was Mary who first tendered to the Divine Child, in the name of the patriarchs and prophets, in the name of all mankind, her profoundest adoration and the most heartfelt gratitude for the benefit of the Incarnation. No one comprehended so well as Mary the immense love of God in this stupendous mystery, accordingly her gratitude was most acceptable to God. Must not this thought be the cause of our joy and happiness when we kneel at the crib, to offer our adoration and homage in union with hers, to the Infant Saviour? On this sacred spot we find St. Joseph, too, who next to the Blessed Virgin is nearest to Jesus. With what sentiments of reverence may he have prostrated himself in humble adoration before the Divine Child! With what ardent love and heartfelt joy may he have taken the Divine Child in his arms and pressed Him to his heart! How were his thoughts and affections united with the Saviour; how happy was he in the possession of such a treasure!

Hosts of angels who had doubtlessly entered the cave with Mary and Joseph, sang hymns in adoration and praise of their Creator made Man. Who could stand back at such a time? Open your ranks, ye heavenly spirits, make way for me to the crib; for love of me the Word was made Flesh. Well might the conviction of my unworthiness repulse me, but the Saviour, Whose goodness and affability as the Apostle says, "appeared today" (Titus 3, 4), invites the heavy-laden and burdened to come to Him that He may refresh them. We will hasten, therefore, to the crib with confidence, kneel before the Divine Child in all humility, begging for a realization of the touching lessons and examples He here imparts to us.

Affections: O Divine Saviour, Who dost love the pure, the simple and the humble of heart, and callest such to Thy manger, behold, I give Thee my poor heart; infuse into it the virtues of Thy holy Childhood, that my whole life may redound to Thy glory, and I become worthy, in union with Mary and Joseph, and all the angels and saints, to thank Thee for all eternity for the inestimable benefit of the Incarnation. O holy, mysterious night, so full of grace, in which the Eternal Word descended from His heavenly home and became Man! Rejoice and be glad with us, ye heavenly hosts, for the Almighty has worked an incomprehensibly great wonder. The King of eternal glory has assumed the form of a servant, and appeared in this world as a delicate, tender, loving Child. The glory of His splendor illuminates the spiritual darkness. He came, our sweetest Saviour, to make us children of God, for it is His pleasure to dwell among us. O Thou amiable, Divine Child, when I consider the incomprehensible love and mercy that induced Thee to assume our human nature, my heart overflows with joy, admiration, adoration and thanksgiving, and my lips must remain silent. No tongue can worthily praise and extol the glory and grace of Thy holy Incarnation. Thou art the great God, the Prince of Peace, the heavenly Bridegroom of our souls. Thou art our Peace, our Salvation, our Bread of life. What can we give Thee in this hour, other than the oblation of our good will, according to the angels' bidding! We lay it, with the promise of our love and fidelity, at Thy feet. Strengthen and confirm in us the holy sentiments inspired by Thy grace. O Mary and Joseph, in your midst let us lay at the feet of the Holy Infant our tribute of adoration and fervent love, singing with the angels: "Glory to God, in the highest!" (Luke

2, 14). Praise and thanksgiving be to our Blessed Saviour, Who replenishes our souls with His divine peace!

Resolution: With heartfelt joy and gratitude, we will renew our vows and good resolves at the crib of the Divine Child.

Spiritual Bouquet: "This day is born to you a Saviour" (Luke 2, 11).

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR DECEMBER 26TH

FEAST OF ST. STEPHEN

"And Stephen, full of grace and fortitude, did great wonders and things among the people. Now there arose some of the synagogue, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit that spoke" (Acts 6, 8). "Now hearing these things, they were cut to the heart and they gnashed with their teeth at him. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looking up steadfastly to heaven, saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And he said: 'Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7, 54-55).

First Prelude: Behold the saint at the moment of his death, his eyes raised to heaven, praying for his executioners.

Second Prelude: O my Jesus, inflame my heart with ardent love of Thee, that I may exercise it faithfully on the many occasions offered.

First Point

ST. STEPHEN WAS REPLETE WITH THE GRACE AND THE STRENGTH OF THE HOLY GHOST

"The grace of God, our Saviour, hath appeared to all men" (Tit. 2, 11), Holy Church exclaims on Christmas day, and today she invites all her children to rejoice when she says, "Come, let us adore the new-born Saviour, Who hath today crowned St. Stephen" (Office). This saint, who as the first martyr gave such glorious testimony of the Lord, is a precious fruit of that superabundant grace which Jesus has poured out upon mankind at His advent into the world. The fire that Jesus had come to cast on the earth enkindled the heart of the holy deacon and inflamed him with holy zeal, which impelled him to spread the doctrine of Christ more and more.

Holy Scripture styles him a man of faith, and full of the Holy Spirit "And Stephen, full of grace and fortitude, did great wonders and signs among the people" (Acts 6, 8). Undoubtedly, it was largely through his influence that the number of disciples increased so rapidly in Jerusalem. Dare we wonder that the spirit of iniquity rose up in arms against this man so full of the Holy Spirit, and goaded the Jews on to destroy him? "They were cut to the heart, and gnashed their teeth at him" we read further in the Acts (7, 54). Such or similar persecutions are, by divine decree, the portion of those who in all sincerity aim at virtue and sanctity.

Let not, then, the fear of tribulations discourage us, for God will not suffer His faithful servants to lack heavenly consolations. "Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, looking up steadfastly to heaven, saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7, 56).

How must a look into heaven have entranced the holy martyr!

Was it not a foretaste of eternal bliss? How must the sight of the Redeemer have strengthened and encouraged him to brave any danger, since he saw in Christ the reward promised to the faithful combatant! But what rendered St. Stephen worthy of such distinction? The Holy Ghost dwelt in his heart because it was pure and spotless; the Holy Ghost filled him with lively faith and burning love, freed him from the fetters of earthly things, so that his mind and heart were constantly directed heavenward, and his glance fixed upwards more with the eye of the spirit than with the bodily eye.

We, too, must prepare a pure and pleasing abode for the Holy Ghost in our heart, that He may replenish it and elevate our desires heavenwards. We will draw nigh to the crib of the Saviour with the living faith and the burning love of St. Stephen. The hard resting place on which our Saviour reposes, like the humiliations and sacrifices that He demands of His servants, will not frighten us, and we will, rather, comprehend the mysteries of His holy Childhood, in all simplicity, and receive the treasure of His grace into our hearts.

Second Point

THE HEROIC LOVE OF ST. STEPHEN

It was the love of the Incarnate God that so powerfully incited St. Stephen to love his God in return, and that with his whole heart, even to the immolation of his life. Therefore he rejoiced to be found worthy, as first martyr, to shed his blood for Him Who had shed His amid excruciating torments on the Cross. This is the power of

love, imbibed from the contemplation of the excessive love of God for us, of which St. Paul says: "The charity of Christ presseth us" (2 Cor. 5, 14).

In order to strengthen him in his combat, Jesus vouchsafed Stephen a look into His glory, but He did not deliver him from the hands of his enemies. He himself appeared on earth that by poverty and renunciation, by immolation, and finally by a painful death, He might enter into His glory, into which He desires His servants to enter, but only after they, too, have trodden the path of suffering. "Everyone who does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14, 33), and "Who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 14, 33). These are the words of our Divine Saviour, which all the saints and all true Christians have pondered in their hearts. The Lord offers to all opportunities to testify their love, if not by bloody martyrdom then, at least, by countless greater or lesser sufferings attendant upon the faithful discharge of the duties of our vocation, and especially the striving for perfection.

St. Stephen suffered cheerfully and heroically because of his great love. He even prayed for his executioners while suffering death at their hands. What a glorious example of love of God and of neighbor! We, however, often lack the necessary strength of soul in the least sufferings; the smallest pebbles of reverses and contradictions smite us to the ground, and we consider them an oppressive burden. We find it hard to pardon an insult, an insignificant fault or offense; and to requite good for evil, we deem impossible. Oh, how weak and inefficient is our love of Jesus! Let us seek to strengthen it by frequent meditation on the boundless love of the Son of God, which drew Him down into this vale of tears to submit to the

humiliations of the manger and, later, to the greatest sufferings. Let us implore this love especially when receiving the Sacrament of Love, in which the Lord is so eager to impart His sentiments to our hearts. In sorrow and tribulations, in imitation of St. Stephen, we will look unwaveringly upon the Saviour, Who watches our combat from the heights of heaven, and rejoices at the victory we achieve by the aid of His all-powerful grace.

Affections: O my Divine Saviour, is it not the selfsame immeasurable love and mercy that revealed Thee yesterday in the poverty and lowliness of the manger, in the weakness and amiability of childhood, that today reveals Thee in heavenly glory encouraging Thy holy martyr to persevere in the struggle, by holding out to him the crown of victory? Yes, O my Jesus, Thou wouldst say: The more you resemble Me in renunciation and patience, in humility and faithful imitation on the way of the cross, the more glorious will be your portion in Me and My glory! Oh enrich us with Thy graces, enrich us with the love of God and of neighbor, that therein we may find strength to fight for Thee, in order to enter Thy glory, to which Thou didst today call Thy faithful servant.

Resolution: I will beg St. Stephen for great love of God and of neighbor.

Spiritual Bouquet: "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7, 55).

Prayer: Our Father . . .

MEDITATION FOR DECEMBER 27TH

FEAST OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

"He that loveth cleanness of heart for the grace of his lips shall have the king for his friend" (Prov. 22, 11).

First Prelude: Behold St. John reclining upon our Lord's bosom at the Last Supper.

Second Prelude: O beloved disciple, obtain for us from the Sacred Heart of Jesus the grace of perfect purity of heart that we may be made receptive for His divine love and worthy of the especial love of His holy Mother.

First Point

ST. JOHN TEACHES US THAT PURITY OF HEART IS A PREREQUISITE FOR PERFECT LOVE OF GOD

St. John, called the beloved disciple, appears today at the court of the Divine Child, in order to have us penetrate deeper into the mysteries of the love of the Incarnate God. Who would be more fit for this holy task than that disciple to whom it was granted, while resting on the bosom of Christ, to contemplate love in its very source, in His Divine Heart, whence he drew the streams of living waters, the treasures of wisdom and knowledge embodied in his writings.

According to the verdict of the Fathers, St. John was specially beloved of the Saviour for his perfect purity of heart. In him, indeed, are verified the words: "He that loveth cleanness of heart for the grace of his lips, shall have the king for his friend." It is not surprising then that St. John was vouchsafed a closer familiarity with his Master than were the other disciples. If anyone should

have been permitted to be the confidant of the thrice holy God and admitted to the knowledge of His mysteries, it surely must have been that disciple whose heart was freer from earthly inclinations than that of any other Apostle, and who was worthier to see God insofar as this is possible on earth, in accordance with the words of Christ "Blessed are the clean of heart; for they shall see God" (Matt. 5, 8).

In placing the feast of St. John so near Christmas, Holy Mother Church wishes to honor holy virginity in a special manner. She considers it a fruit of the blessed Nativity of the Incarnate Son of God, a fruit of the divine love manifested therein, of the grace brought us by our Saviour. It is that infinite love, first manifested in the crib and later in its perfection on the cross, which has enamored so many noble souls and constrained them to offer Jesus their heart without reserve. This holy virginity has become for all who have chosen it the fertile soil upon which all good and all Christian perfection has matured to such marvelous sanctity.

Thank God that He has called you to so exalted a vocation, and endeavor to correspond most zealously to this great grace of election, by persevering prayer, by strict custody of your senses and the affections of your heart, by detachment from all earthly inclinations, that Jesus may give you His Heart and render you worthy of His Divine Friendship.

Do we strive to draw from the Heart of Jesus that science of pure souls which teaches us to know God better and to love Him more intensely?

Second Point

JESUS ENTRUSTS HIS VIRGINAL MOTHER TO THE PROTECTION OF ST. JOHN

When Jesus died upon the cross, He left His Blessed Mother on earth. Who would be deemed worthy to be custodian of so rare a treasure? Since Jesus loved no one more dearly than His holy Mother, He willed to entrust her to none else than the beloved disciple. From the heights of the cross our Lord saw this disciple who persevered with Him and, as a reward for his fidelity, He entrusted to him His dearest treasure. John should be a son to Mary, and Mary, a mother to John; "When Jesus therefore had seen His Mother and the disciple standing, whom He loved, He saith to the disciple: 'Behold, thy mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own" (John 19, 26-27).

These words of Jesus produced a most filial devotion in heart of the Apostle and a most tender, maternal love in the heart of Mary. With what marvelous gifts did not the Saviour adorn the soul of the Apostle to make him worthy of His exalted position! What a plenitude of graces did not the prayers of Mary and the familiar intercourse with her effect in John! St. Thomas of Villanova's words relative to St. Joseph can fittingly be applied to the beloved disciple: "If a single salutation of this Virgin effected sanctification in the precursor even before birth, what must not intercourse with her of many years have produced!" Extol the Lord for the innumerable graces that were imparted to St. John through the hands of the Blessed Mother. Beg the saint to present you to our Lady and commend you to her maternal care.

If all Christians are to consider Mary as their Mother

and invoke her as such, then religious, who are the spouses of her Divine Son, have a special claim to her. Therefore, address yourselves to this good Mother with child-like confidence, and you shall never want enlightenment, strength, and consolation.

Is it my aim to imitate St. John in his sincere love of the Mother of God, and in his confident intercourse with her?

Affections: St. John, thou Apostle of love, who wast so dear to the Heart of the Divine Master, who didst penetrate with the vision of spotless purity the mystery of the Incarnate Eternal Wisdom, lead us to the manger of Him Whose delight it is to be with the children of men, Who seeks pure hearts, for His abode. Obtain for us the grace that Mary, given to us as Mother through thee, take us under her patronage and help us according to thy example to imitate her virtues and render ourselves daily more worthy of the title "Children of Mary." Let us ever experience, especially in the hour of death, how good it is to love Mary.

Resolution: For the love of Jesus and Mary, and to merit their especial pleasure, I will aspire to great purity of heart.

Spiritual Bouquet: "He that loveth cleanness of heart . . . shall have the king for his friend."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR DECEMBER 28TH

FEAST OF HOLY INNOCENTS

"Then Herod perceiving that he was deluded by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and sending, killed all

the sons that were born in Bethlehem and in all the borders thereof from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men" (Matt. 2, 16).

First Prelude: Call to mind the sequence of events leading to the massacre of the holy infants.

Second Prelude: O my Jesus, through the sufferings of Thy holy Childhood, infuse into my heart courage and resignation, that I may carry my daily cross meritoriously.

First Point

THE DESIGNS OF GOD CONCERNING THE HOLY INNOCENTS

We read in Holy Scripture: "The Souls of the just are in the hands of God" (Wis. 3, 1). The Holy Innocents, the victims of the cruelty of Herod, were fortunate, indeed, since in return for short sufferings they were admitted into the kingdom of everlasting peace. By their early death, God preserved them from the innumerable dangers and storms of this woeful earthly existence. They escaped not only temporal needs, but also the serious perils that threaten the welfare of the soul. Had a long life been their portion perhaps they, too, would have rejected the God-sent Messiah, would have made themselves guilty of deicide, and incurred eternal damnation. As it was, however, they were permitted to give testimony of Jesus Christ by their blood; they were permitted to be the first flowers of that abundant harvest of martyrs; they were destined to glorify the crib of the Son of God through the sacrifice of their lives. What a tribute of thanks will they not offer to the Divine Redeemer through-

out all eternity, for the incomparable grace of their glorious election!

The mothers of these innocent victims did not fathom this mystery of grace and were inconsolable in their grief. They considered the death of their little ones as the greatest misfortune, as the shattering of their fondest hopes. How would they not have rejoiced, had it been revealed that God would draw so much good from the malicious act of Herod, that a transient tribulation could be converted into a source of so much joy! How often do we conduct ourselves similarly in depressing recurrences, which in reality are only the workings of divine mercy! Let us, therefore, take to heart the salutary lesson of this feast, namely, that God directs all things, even the apparently evil, to the welfare of His chosen ones, that He directs all things to ultimate good.

Second Point

IT IS A BENEFIT TO SUFFER FOR THE HONOR OF GOD

Although we are not exposed to the painful tortures of martyrdom, in religious life, and especially as Christian educators, we will find various discomforts, mortifications and sufferings. Ascetics compare religious life to martyrdom, and concede also that the length of the former renders it more burdensome. All the exercises of religious life are directed to the subjugation of the passions and the mortification of self will, with the ultimate purpose that the spirit may rise to heavenly things and live for God alone. The Holy Innocents, in their sufferings, testify to the designs of our Lord relative to the elect. He Himself proclaims, through His example in the crib, the great truth that innocence, too, must perform penance. All who wish

to resemble the Redeemer must suffer in union with Him. To suffer for the love of God is, therefore, a sign of predilection, it is the means by which a soul can prove her love for God, it is the measure of our eternal happiness. Oh, how we deceive ourselves if we try to evade sufferings, if we consider them as a punishment and endure them with ill will! How happy, on the contrary, are they who suffer for justice's sake and live for God!

Do I consider the sufferings of life as the coin wherewith to purchase my future happiness? Do I bear the little hardships of my holy vocation with the sincere desire to resemble my Saviour?

Affections: O Divine Child, Who camest into the world to redeem and sanctify us, what great sacrifices didst Thou not impose upon Thyself, even in the crib, that I might recognize that only a penitential, mortified life can lead to Thy love, and to perfect union with Thee. Yes, henceforward, with the help of Thy grace, I will work zealously at my sanctification. With childlike confidence I will submit to the direction of Thy Divine Providence. Through the voluntary acceptance of the daily contradictions, I will try to secure strength and courage to overcome all difficulties in the road to perfection.

Resolution: I will unite the mortifications that God may require of me today, with the sufferings that my dear Saviour endured for me in the crib.

Spiritual Bouquet: "To those who love God, all things tend to good."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR DECEMBER 29TH

THE CANTICLE OF THE ANGELS

"And behold an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them: 'Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people. For this day is born to you a saviour, Who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will' " (Luke 2, 9-14).

First Prelude: Imagine you hear the canticle of the angels on the plains of Bethlehem, and follow them to the manger where they adore the Divine Child in profound humility.

Second Prelude: O Jesus, give me a heart that will seek Thy honor, so that I may taste the fullness of the heavenly peace announced by the angels.

First Point

THE CANTICLE OF THE ANGELS

Scripture tells us "The heavens show forth the glory of God" (Ps. 18). This took place in a most particular manner in that holy night when Christ, the Lord, appeared on earth as a sweet Infant. Behold, the heavens are opened, and with the voices of unnumbered angels, resounds the canticle: "Glory to God in the highest; and

on earth peace to men of good will" (Luke 2, 14). Herewith they announced the design which the Divine Saviour had in His Nativity, the glory and the salvation of mankind. Indeed, glory was offered to God in this mystery, since He received from His only begotten Son in human form, a homage that was worthy of Him.

To glorify God and promote His honor must be our aim in all our actions and omissions. Nothing will then be able to disturb our peace, for we shall possess that good will to which peace has been promised. The more intensely a soul is imbued with the burning desire to glorify God and to fulfill His holy Will perfectly, the richer and rarer is the peace that she enjoys. Let us strive, then, to remove from our will everything contrary to the good pleasure of God, so that even on earth, we may possess the peace that surpasses all understanding and is a foretaste of that eternal peace, wherewith God will reward and rejoice His faithful ones throughout eternity.

Second Point

CONTEMPLATE THE ANGELS OFFERING THEIR HOMAGE TO THE DIVINE LORD

How great must not the astonishment, reverence and love of the holy angels have been when they saw their Lord and King reposing in the crib, under the humble semblance of a child! But with a still greater humility, they adored Him as their God and venerated His exalted majesty hidden under the veil of profound abasement. St. Paul says: "All the angels of God adore Him" (Hebr. 1-6). Let us rejoice in the profound homage proffered the Christ-Child, let us ardently long to possess their love, that we may worthily praise our Divine Saviour; to emu-

late their purity, that we be worthy to draw upon ourselves His divine complacence; to be imbued with their zeal for His honor, that we may be consumed with the desire to win all hearts for Him.

May the angels be our models in adoring the Blessed Sacrament where we perpetually find the Divine Child that once lay in the stable in Bethlehem. We were not privileged to adore Him there, but here in union with the angels we may in our feeble way participate in their homage. The words of the Psalmist: "Thou hast made man a little less than the angels" (Ps. 8, 60), refer to religious, in particular; hence their lives must be angelic,—more heavenly than earthly. While they perform their vocational duties, in which they are actually carrying out the designs of God, the spirit should lift itself to Him in prayer, and contemplate Him in union with the angels.

Am I solicitous to imitate the purity of the angels in my conduct, and thus to render my prayer more acceptable to my Divine Redeemer?

Affections: O Divine Saviour, Thou joy of angels and of men, I prostrate myself in adoration before Thy crib and offer Thee, in reparation for my unworthiness, the pure and lofty homage which the angelic choirs present to Thee unremittingly. In profound reverence, I consecrate my heart and soul, all that I am and have to thee, to be employed in Thy service, solely for Thy honor and glory. O Divine Infant, that camest down to earth to restore the honor of the heavenly Father, give me the good will that seeks naught, desires naught, but to please God alone and win all hearts for Him. Grant us, O Lord, Thy peace which is the embodiment of all good and the pledge of the blissful peace that awaits us in heaven.

Resolution: We will unite ourselves frequently during

the day with the holy angels, to offer the Christ-Child our adoration.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will!"

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR DECEMBER 30TH

THE SHEPHERDS AT THE CRIB

"And it came to pass that after the angels departed from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, 'Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this Word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us!' And they came with haste and they found Mary and Joseph and the Infant lying in the manger" (Luke 2, 15, 16).

First Prelude: In spirit kneel in the stable at Bethlehem, and see the shepherds prostrating themselves in adoration before the sweet Infant.

Second Prelude: O my Saviour, grant that I may learn from the shepherds to follow Thy inspirations promptly and joyfully, and to labor zealously for the promotion of Thy glory.

First Point

THE SHEPHERDS HASTEN TO THE CRIB OF THE SAVIOUR

With reverence and holy awe, the shepherds receive the tidings of the angels. Animated with a lively faith, they hasten to Bethlehem to see Him for Whom they so ardently longed, and for Whose advent they so frequently and fervently sighed. They do not tarry until

daybreak but putting aside their concerns, the guarding of their flocks, they depart. They are intent only upon reaching Bethlehem, to see that which had been announced to them. What an admirable example of correspondence to divine grace! When prompted by grace are we eager to co-operate with it? We should be ready to go everywhere, to do whatsoever we have recognized as the holy Will of God, and not permit ourselves to be intimidated by human respect or earthly considerations. Who could describe the faith and the devotion with which the pious shepherds adored the great God in the tiny Babe! How highly must they not have prized their simple life on beholding such humility! How dear must not their poverty have been to them! Let us thank the Divine Child for the consoling lessons He gave us by calling the shepherds to His crib. Even here our Saviour shows that He manifests to the simple and lowly of heart what He withholds from the wise and learned. Let us then love simplicity and candor, for possessing these, we may approach our Blessed Saviour with confidence, especially in the Sacrament of His Love.

Second Point

THE SHEPHERDS ANNOUNCE THE JOYFUL TIDINGS

The evangelist relates that the shepherds returned from the crib, praising and glorifying God because of all they had seen and heard. Indeed, they had reason to rejoice that among so many millions they were deemed worthy to see and adore the newborn Saviour, the Redeemer of the world, the Expected among nations. In the words of the angel, that all peoples would rejoice, they recognized the commission to announce the wonders they

had witnessed and to give testimony of the fulfillment of the promise made to Israel. Let us admire here the workings of divine love in the hearts of the Shepherds. Filled with holy gratitude, they desire to draw all hearts to the crib, that all may participate in the same graces. But far greater than the joy and happiness which the shepherds experience, is that which the dear Lord affords us when we are permitted not only to adore and praise Him, but to receive Him into our hearts. If we wish to determine the fruit we derive from our prayers and Holy Communions, we should note whether we are animated with an ardent desire to promote the honor of God and the salvation of souls. Whoever neglects the opportunities of promoting the welfare of souls, loses much merit and manifests but little love of Jesus. Let us implore the Divine Child to inflame our hearts with His ardent love.

Affections: O my beloved Saviour, filled with joy, I also appear at Thy crib, in order to adore Thee, to love Thee and to offer Thee the gratitude of my heart, in union with the happy shepherds. How pleasing to Thee were the faith, the simplicity, the candor of these loyal, childlike souls! How bounteously didst Thou reward them with graces and blessings! Oh, let my heart be filled with their sentiments! Let me participate in the enlightenment and the operations of grace which Thou dost so generously impart to simple, candid souls who seek Thee alone in the fulfillment of their duties. Grant me zeal animated by Thy love, that I may lead others to Thee, so Thou mayest be known, loved and praised by all in time and in eternity.

Resolution: With zeal and joy, we will fulfill the holy will of God in the duties of our vocation.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Let us go over to Bethlehem and

let us see what the angel has announced to us, this word that is come to pass."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR DECEMBER 31ST

THE LAST DAY IN THE YEAR

"Work whilst it is day: the night cometh when no man can work" (John 9, 4).

First Prelude: Imagine yourself before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, to render an account of your past life.

Second Prelude: O my Saviour, grant me grace to know my faults of the past year, and to recognize the means to regulate my interior for the future, and thus to promote my spiritual welfare.

First Point

REVIEW OF THE PAST

Now, at the close of the year, let us reflect upon the innumerable benefits that God in His infinite goodness has bestowed upon us. He has preserved our life, and with paternal care, provided for all our needs. He has lavished His graces upon us to purify and sanctify our souls. Daily He has called us to the Banquet of His Love, to confidential intercourse with Him in prayer. Daily, too, by loving inspirations He has taught us, admonished us and incited us to the practice of virtue. Filled with profound gratitude ought we not cry out with the Psalmist: "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?" (Ps. 115, 12). We ought,

likewise, be thankful for the sufferings and tribulations which the heavenly Father in His infinite wisdom and love has sent us.

When we consider the innumerable benefits of our God, does not the question force itself upon us: Have I used all these things as God willed that I should use them, for the correction of my faults and for the acquisition of virtue? Oh, of how much sloth, lukewarmness, and ingratitude have I been guilty in the service of my God! How many faults have I committed! How many opportunities of practicing charity, patience, fervor, humility and mortification have I neglected! Let us, in bitterness of soul, lament our great loss, and ask forgiveness. Hastening to the crib of the Divine Saviour, Who has assumed all our guilt and has become our hostage, we will place all our confidence in His infinite love and mercy, and by way of expiation for our faults and negligences we will present to the heavenly Father the sufferings and humiliations of His Divine Son.

Which infidelity of the past year do I now most regret? Which cross has brought me the greatest blessings?

Second Point

WHOLESOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Having concluded the past, we will now consider the future. How much time God has apportioned for us to work at our salvation, is not known to us. Perhaps the coming year will be the last of our lives. Oh! how zealously ought we then begin it! How forcibly should we not rouse all our energy to labor at our sanctification! Let us rivet our attention particularly upon that point against which we failed most in the past year. With great

solicitude, let us seek the most appropriate means to guard against it, and to ensure daily progress in virtue. May we not consider as directed to us the warning of the Lord: "Work whilst it is day; the night cometh when no man can work" (John 9, 4)? Oh, how wise are the religious who always live as if each day were their last; how calm they will be when their last hour is sounding! With what hope, with what confidence, can they not appear before the judgment seat of God!

Although God, in His infinite Wisdom, has withheld from us the number of our days, we are certain that these days will bring us sufferings, crosses, tribulations. We will, however, with loving resignation, accept in advance the crosses God has destined for us, and magnanimously submit to all the discomforts, mortifications and reverses inseparable from our daily duties and from the zealous striving for perfection. What graces and blessings will not the cross borne humbly, patiently, and lovingly, merit for us!

Let us ask ourselves today: "What sacrifice does God demand of me? What means must I employ in order to correspond to His designs?"

Affections: O my God, what a plenitude of graces and benefits has Thy infinite generosity bestowed upon me during the past year? Can I ever thank Thee adequately? Alas! To my great confusion I must acknowledge that I justly deserve Thy chastisements because of my ingratitude and my abuse of Thy benefits. Pardon, O benign Father, the negligence, the indolence and the infidelity of Thy poor, weak child. By means of prayer and the Sacraments, Thou didst offer me abundant graces to enable me to fulfill Thy holy Will zealously in the duties of my vocation, but I have shamefully abused Thy love by resisting

grace. Do Thou, O my beloved Jesus, supply all my negligences through Thy infinite merits; increase Thy love in my heart, that in the future I may courageously and steadfastly follow Thee on the way of the cross, to Thy glory.

Resolution: Today I will perform all my duties with especial fervor and zeal.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Work whilst it is day."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 1ST

THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD

"And after eight days were accomplished, that the Child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus, which was given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb" (Luke 2, 21).

First Prelude: Contemplate Jesus at His Circumcision, offering His Precious Blood for us to the heavenly Father.

Second Prelude: Inflame my heart with Thy love, my dear Jesus, that I may begin the new year with zeal and generosity.

First Point

THE LOVE OF JESUS IN THIS MYSTERY

Love constrained our Saviour even at the Circumcision to shed His Precious Blood for our salvation. "The souls of men were most precious in His sight," says St. Charles Borromeo, in a sermon on this mystery, "hence, He wished to redeem them from the servitude of Satan and establish a security against such slavery. Filled with ardent love and tender solicitude, Christ begins, on the day of His Circumcision, that work of redemption which He wills

to consummate on Calvary." What love on the part of our Divine Saviour! Here He manifests Himself as the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. At the price of His Blood, the God-Man purchases for Himself the sweet name, Jesus, and by sufferings, reveals to us the excess of His love.

If Jesus is so eager to shed His Precious Blood for us, can we hesitate to give Him our hearts? Let us return love for love, by offering ourselves to Him anew at the beginning of this year. The strength so necessary for this generous self-immolation Jesus wills to impart to us in the Sacrament of His Love, by means of that same Precious Blood which He begins to shed for us on this day. It will fortify us for that spiritual circumcision of the heart by which the faults and the inordinate inclinations are removed. Let us then daily unite the offering of ourselves with the oblation Christ made of Himself to His Eternal Father. In loving gratitude for His first sacrifice, let us offer Him, at least, all those sacrifices, which we are able to make with His grace. What is there in me that must still be removed by the knife of spiritual circumcision? Is it vanity, sensuality, pride, self-will, impatience, or sloth?

Second Point

CHRIST'S HUMBLE SUBMISSION TO THE LAW OF CIRCUMCISION

At the very beginning of His earthly career, our Divine Saviour willed, by perfect obedience, to atone for the disobedience of Adam. He, the Supreme Lawgiver, although not bound by the law, fulfills even its minutest details, thus showing by His example that He had not come to dispense from the law, but to fulfill it. We will

admire the humble obedience of Jesus and learn from Him, our sublime Model, to fulfill the Divine Will by perfect observance of our Holy Rule. Thus we shall become true religious. We will observe not only rules that are easy and agreeable, but also such as demand sacrifices. Knowing that human pride is the cause of all disobedience to the law of God, Jesus abases Himself in the mystery of the Circumcision, by submitting to a rite to which sinners alone are subject. Are we not confounded at the sight of such abasement? We who, being sinners, fear to be considered as such, and much more, to be treated accordingly? Is it not pride that renders the humble duties of our holy calling fatiguing and burdensome at times? Let us bear in mind that loving and persevering fidelity in the performance of ordinary duties constitutes true greatness. It is this fidelity that makes us pleasing to God and secures for us the fullness of graces and merits. In future, we will seek our joy and happiness in the prompt and perfect observance of our Holy Rule. Love, yes, ardent love for Him "Who also loved us and gave Himself for us" (Gal. 2, 20), shall ever animate us in our earnest endeavor.

Affections: O dear Jesus, to prove Thy infinite love for me Thou didst will to shed Thy Precious Blood. Should not the consideration of such love fill me with sincere gratitude, and cause me to exclaim: "Lord, I will give Thee love for love, sacrifice for sacrifice. Thou offerest for me today the first droplets of Thy Precious Blood, and I give Thee the first moments of the new year which, with the assistance of Thy grace, I resolve to spend in the earnest pursuit of genuine virtue and sanctity. Support my good will, dear Jesus. May Thy holy name be my strength, my hope, my salvation, my consolation, and

my life. In Thy name, I shall courageously undertake the battle against the enemies of my soul, and shall carry the yoke of Thy law with unflinching fidelity."

Resolution: Animated with grateful love, I will begin a life of love and sacrifice.

Spiritual Bouquet: "I have said it: 'Today I will begin.' "

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 2ND

THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

"His name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb" (Luke II, 21).

First Prelude: Consider that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bend in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.

Second Prelude: O my Jesus, grant me the grace to understand rightly the power of Thy holy name, that through It, my mind, my heart, and all my actions may be sanctified."

First Point

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HOLY NAME

As the Israelites received a name at Circumcision, so the Son of God, when in the form of a servant He submitted Himself to that painful ceremony, willed that St. Joseph and His spotless Mother should give Him a name. This was merely the fulfillment of the Divine Will manifested to Mary by the words of Gabriel: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus" (Luke I, 31), and to St. Joseph in

the revelation: "And thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1, 21). The heavenly Father reserved to Himself the right and power to give to His incarnate Son a name that should designate the sublime nature of His Being and divine mission.

The name, Jesus, tells us what the Son of God, is for us,—our Saviour and Redeemer. With the name, Jesus, began the work of our redemption. By His voluntary submission to the law, He offered Himself to His Eternal Father as a victim, eager to embrace the privations and sufferings of a life to be terminated by a cruel and bloody death on the cross. "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross," says the Apostle; "for which cause God also hath exalted Him and hath given Him a name which is above all names" (Phil. 11, 8-9). Let us thank our amiable Saviour for having assumed the name, Jesus, for love of us and having willed to shed the first drops of His Precious Blood, even in infancy. In grateful love, we will reverence His holy name during this new year by placing all our trust in Its infinite power. The Incarnate God, in the mystery of the Circumcision, has given to all mankind the sweetest and most joyous salutation in His own sweet name, Jesus—Saviour—and as a further pledge of His love, He has added to it the rarest gifts,—the example of the most perfect obedience, the deepest humility and the most complete sacrifice. Shall we leave such love unheeded by neglecting to imitate these virtues so dear to Him, and so necessary for us? By our special calling to the religious state, the sweet Saviour wishes to impart to us the fullness of His virtues, if we but surrender ourselves wholly to Him, by perfect conformity to His

adorable Will. To the practice of which particular virtue does the love of my Divine Saviour incite me?

Second Point

WE SHOULD DO ALL IN THE NAME OF JESUS

The Apostle St. Paul admonishes us in his epistle to the Colossians: "All whatsoever you do in work or in word, do all in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ" (Col. 3, 17). In imitation of Jesus, Who, in the moment of His conception, offered to the Eternal Father solely for His honor and glory, His mortal life with all its privations and sufferings, and Who in His Circumcision gave His own Blood, as a pledge of His incomprehensible love for us, thus becoming in very truth our "Jesus," we too will give our good God every day, hour and minute of this new year. In the name of Jesus, we will offer Him our thoughts, words, works and sufferings, that they may tend to His greater honor and glory. We will, in future, live and labor but for love of Him.

As the Spouse in the Canticle bore the name of her beloved on her arm, so we should bear the name of Jesus in our hearts, in our thoughts, and on our lips. "All for Jesus," should be our motto,—naught for the world, and naught for self and selfish interests. All labor and rest, all joy and pain,—all shall be for Jesus. Such sentiments are befitting a soul consecrated to God, a soul espoused by the bonds of religious vows to the dear Saviour. Jesus should live and labor in us, and we, in all our thoughts, words and works, should live in Him. Our Saviour Himself has said: "He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit" (John 15, 5). Let us permit the dear Saviour to produce in us these fruits of true

virtue by our constant and intimate union with Him. Let us begin each day's work, every occupation, with the invocation of His sweet name, "For there is," says St. Paul, "no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4, 12). Do I always pronounce the holy name of Jesus with due reverence and devotion? Do I always strive to perform my actions with the invocation of this sweet name and in union with my dear Saviour?

Affections: O divine, O sweet, O glorious name, which the heavenly Father had known and pronounced from all eternity! Ah, impress Thyself upon our souls, that through Thee they may be made worthy of eternal salvation. Relying upon Thy power, we will begin the new year with the firm resolve to die to self, in order to live for Him, Who died for love of us. May Thy name, O dear Jesus, be incessantly in our hearts and upon our lips, that through It we may conquer our enemies and persevere in good to the end. Grant, O Jesus, that having tenderly loved and honored Thy glorious name on earth, we may be made worthy to unite with Thy angels and saints in singing Its praises throughout eternity.

Resolution: We will frequently pronounce the holy name of Jesus with love and confidence.

Spiritual Bouquet: "O Jesus, be to me Jesus, and save me."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 3RD

MARY AND JOSEPH AT THE CRIB OF JESUS

"And they found Mary and Joseph and the Infant, lying in the manger" (Luke 2, 16).

First Prelude: Behold Mary and Joseph in profound adoration at the crib of the Infant Saviour.

Second Prelude: O Jesus, grant me the grace to understand and to imitate the virtues of Thy holy Childhood.

First Point

MARY AT THE CRIB OF HER DIVINE CHILD

What a ravishing spectacle for the holy angels is Mary, the virginal Mother, at the crib of the Incarnate God! She is holier and more beautiful than all the angels and archangels, the cherubim and seraphim, and because of her nearness to God, was alone worthy to become the Mother of God! Let us, too, behold Mary and seek in some measure, at least, to fathom the joy that fills her purest heart when for the first time she sees her Divine Son, presses Him to her heart, and lavishes upon Him all the marks of her tender, maternal affection. How lively is her faith, and with what humble astonishment does she not oft repeat: This helpless Child is in truth the great God, the King of heaven and earth; the Saviour of the world, the Expected of the nations, the Salvation of Israel, and nevertheless, He is my Son! She ponders assiduously in her heart all that the prophets had foretold concerning this Child—what the angel had promised her, and what had already come to pass, thereby increasing her faith and love. Thus she preserved in her maternal heart as a precious treasure, the mysteries accomplished before her eyes, for according to the decrees of the Most High, Mary by becoming the teacher of the Apostles, was to transmit this treasure as a sacred heritage to the Church of Christ.

May the example of Mary animate us with an ardent desire to ponder the truths of our holy religion with lively faith and humble love. May all our thoughts, affections, and inclinations, like those of Mary, be ever directed to the Divine Child. And, lastly, we beg the Infant Saviour to regulate our interior and exterior in accordance with His example, that thus we may attain to an ever closer union with Him.

Second Point

ST. JOSEPH AT THE CRIB OF JESUS

How could we contemplate Mary at the crib of the Divine Child without, at the same time, giving attention to St. Joseph! Like Mary, he, too, ardently longed for the Saviour. With loving hands he prepared, as well as his utter poverty permitted, the stable which the Son of God had chosen as His birthplace in preference to all the palaces of the earth. Now the sweet heavenly Babe has appeared, and the humble foster-father hardly ventures to gaze upon the countenance of Him Who is the Splendor of the Father. Joseph is, as it were, overwhelmed by the contemplation of the infinite love and mercy of God toward men manifested in this mystery, and by the thought of the great grace conferred upon him in being the chosen foster-father and protector of the Divine Child. His angelic purity and ardent love, his childlike simplicity, his living faith, and fear of God, his meekness, and all the virtues of his noble soul, are augmented by the contemplation of the Incarnate Word. How dear to him is his own retired, and, in the eyes of the world, despised, life, when he beholds the powerful God, Whose throne is heaven, and Whose foot-stool is the earth, profoundly abasing Himself, by choosing, as an

outcast of human society, to be born in a cave and laid in a manger!

O precious poverty, O blessed seclusion, which merited for Joseph the happiness of witnessing all these miracles! In spirit, we will kneel beside the holy foster-father, and in all sincerity ask ourselves whether we love to be unknown to the world, and employed in the lowliest and most hidden services in the house? In such employments we are most certain of finding Jesus, in the company of Mary and Joseph.

Affections: O holy Virgin, Mother of my Saviour, and thou, St. Joseph, chosen foster-father of Jesus, in union with you, I prostrate myself before the crib of the Divine Child, and desire to participate in the sentiments of your loving hearts. Grant, that there I may learn to understand and imitate the virtues of His holy Childhood—His humility, silence, recollection, and above all, His perfect conformity with the Will of His heavenly Father.

Resolution: I will, in the course of the day, often recall the fruit of the morning's meditation.

Spiritual Bouquet: "But Mary kept these words, pondering them in her heart."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 4TH

POVERTY OF JESUS IN THE CRIB

"And she brought forth her first-born Son and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2-7).

First Prelude: Represent to yourselves the wretched stable and the hard crib in which the Divine Child reposes.

Second Prelude: O Divine Saviour, teach us by Thy example to esteem, and cheerfully to practice holy poverty.

First Point

JESUS TEACHES US TO ESTEEM POVERTY

Faith teaches us that this poor Child, bedded on straw, in the manger at Bethlehem, is He of Whom the Psalmist says: "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof: the world and all they that dwell therein" (Ps. 23, 1). Why is it that the Lord, Who has the wealth of all creation at His command, chooses poverty for His inseparable companion through life? Why does He despise all splendor, all excess, all convenience, to be the poorest among the poor? Jesus willed to sanctify poverty, since He wills it to be the portion of His elect in this life, that He might insure to them the riches of heaven. O precious virtue, up to the time of Christ but slightly recognized among men, how wert Thou exalted at the crib! How has Jesus, Himself, exalted thee and animated thousands for thee! How many, O my Jesus, have been taught, by Thy example, patiently to suffer poverty and privations and thus to enrich themselves for heaven! Countless souls, enamored of Thee, have voluntarily despised the goods of his world, to embrace Thy life of renunciation.

Animated by such an example, we will, with all our heart, renew our vow of poverty, at the crib of the Divine Child. We will thank Jesus for having called us to the practice of this virtue, which contains in itself the secret of sanctity. Earthly goods fetter the heart and hinder it

from raising itself to God; but the heart free from all earthly desires and affections, cleaves to God and is inebriated with the delights that result from this loving and intimate union. We will thank our dear Saviour for having atoned for our sins, by a life of extreme poverty. Let us say with a great saint: "Thou wert poor, O Jesus, to enrich me—yea, to enrich me with graces and everlasting goods." Do we manifest our esteem and love of holy poverty by cheerfully bearing all the privations met with in religious life?

Second Point

JESUS TEACHES US HOW TO PRACTICE HOLY POVERTY

"Let us consider," says St. Charles Borromeo, "the profound poverty and abasement that the King of Heaven chose at His birth." His dwelling is poor; poor, His crib; Mary, His Mother, is poor, everything about Him breathes poverty, and, yet He shares His poorly shelter with the irrational creatures. Such is the advent of the Creator of the world, such the royal splendor of His holy Nativity. Religious poverty, which we have the happiness to profess, requires that we love it, especially in its effects —namely, hunger, thirst, cold, fatiguing labors, privations and the contempt that it frequently elicits from the world. This truly evangelical virtue requires many great sacrifices, but Jesus generously requites all that we suffer for love of Him, so that afflictions and privations are as naught. Therefore, St. Magdalen of Pazzi admonished her religious: "Rejoice in misfortune and affliction, because after a little while you will receive a crown of eternal glory, and for a slight privation you will enjoy

bliss without end." Are we animated with an ardent love of poverty at the sight of Jesus, Who in order to redeem and enrich mankind, subjects Himself to a life of suffering and privations? Though it is impossible for us to imitate Jesus in the excess of His poverty, yet love of our Divine Spouse, and love of that sweet bond that unites us with Him, ought to make us ingenious in choosing for ourselves what is least gratifying and most fatiguing to nature.

Are these my sentiments? Have I ever complained of the effects of the poverty I have vowed to God?

Affections: O my beloved Saviour, how little and poor art Thou for love of me! To elevate me, Thou dost abase Thyself; to enrich me with grace in this life, and with everlasting glory in the world to come, Thou art the poorest of all the children of men. Full of reverence and grateful love, I kiss, in spirit, Thy poor crib; and with all the fervor of my soul renew my holy vow of poverty renouncing all attachment to earthly things, and willingly, yea, cheerfully accepting the privations, discomforts and the apparent forgetfulness of creatures. By the merits of Thy poverty, O my Jesus, replenish me with the wealth of Thy divine wisdom and love; enrich me with graces and virtues, that Thou mayest be my sole good here and in eternity.

Resolution: I will deposit the little privations that I meet with today, as an oblation at the feet of Jesus in the crib.

Spiritual Bouquet: "He has become poor that He might enrich us through His poverty" (Cor. 2, 9).

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 5TH

THE SIMPLICITY OF THE DIVINE CHILD

"And this shall be a sign unto you, you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger" (Luke 2, 12).

First Prelude: In spirit kneel reverently at the crib of the Divine Child.

Second Prelude: O Jesus, let me realize Thy love for humility and simplicity, and give me grace to imitate Thy holy example.

First Point

THE BEAUTY OF SIMPLICITY

In the Divine Child we behold the greatest simplicity ever found on earth in all its lovableness. No one can ponder the beauty of this heavenly virtue in the Christ Child without feeling himself comforted and touched. There lies the amiable Child, wrapped in swaddling clothes, on the coarse straw, His bright eyes announcing to us peace of heart. Even now, He inflames all who are of good will with the fire of divine love. Our Lord's primary motive in teaching holy simplicity by His example was His desire to lead mankind, caught in the snares of deception and cunning laid by the tempter, back to their God.

Simplicity is characterized by complete conformity of the will with the Divine Will, and the sole desire to seek the divine pleasure, saying with Jesus: "My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me" (John 4, 34). In virtue of such complete surrender, simple souls walk under the divine guidance enjoying absolute security. Like a

child, serving a loving father, they labor cheerfully, with the pure intention, without solicitude for the future. Simple, upright souls, free from ambiguity and artifice, are universal favorites, and not infrequently will the presence of one such soul in a community suffice to create enthusiasm for this lovable virtue. Simplicity lends to religious the amiability and charm of a child; their countenance mirrors the purity and joy of hearts that belong solely to God, whose peace, consequently, cannot be disturbed.

Instead of growing disheartened at sight of their faults and weaknesses, they take occasion to humble themselves, entrusting themselves anew to God's loving protection. O holy virtue of simplicity, enter my heart that with thee I may walk secure.

Second Point

THE PRACTICE OF THE VIRTUE OF SIMPLICITY

The words of Scripture: "Unless you become as little children you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18, 3), apply primarily to religious. Sad to say, the virtue of simplicity is no longer found in the world; all the more diligently should it be fostered in the cloister. What will it avail religious, no matter how skilled they are, if in true simplicity they look not solely to God, thereby to make themselves worthy of reward. Besides, in virtue of the purity and simplicity of our sentiments, we resemble God, Whose very essence is simplicity. He enlightens the hearts of the simple, in whom dwells not even a shadow of insincerity, and manifests to them His mysteries. He loves to impart to them an abundance of graces, because they justly ascribe all to Him.

To despise, from the bottom of our hearts, all considerations prompted by self-love and all less good intentions, is the first step toward simplicity. The next step consists in our endeavor to suppress every trace of insincerity in our thoughts, words, desires and actions, and in striving to discharge our duties to please God, alone, in accordance with His holy designs.

A simple soul is unruffled and charitable towards all, without distinction; accommodates herself to all; yields to others; makes sacrifices, preferably secretly and unnoticed; is moderate in work, not busying herself with many things at a time; avoids everything that might appear singular in her exercises of devotion; is as equally opposed to depression as to the lofty flight of presumption. How happy the religious who strive daily to execute these counsels!

Affections: O Divine Saviour, by Thy prophet Thou hast said: "Wisdom shall perish from their wise men, and the understanding of the prudent men shall be hid" (Is. 29, 14). Therefore, Thou, O God didst will to appear on earth clothed with the weaknesses of human nature, by the simplicity of childhood to manifest the depths of Thy unfathomable wisdom and to annihilate human pride. Enlighten my understanding, O Jesus, that I may rightly comprehend the sweet mysteries of Thy sacred Infancy. Strengthen my will, that, disregarding the opinion of men, I may aim at the one end, to walk before Thee in childlike simplicity, seeking Thy pleasure in all my thoughts, words, and actions. Give me this grace, O Lord, I pray Thee, by the merit of Thy holy Childhood.

Resolution: In all my actions I will seek to please God alone.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Unless you become as little children you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18, 3).

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 6TH

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

"Behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem saying: 'Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east and are come to adore Him'" (Matt. 2, 2).

First Prelude: In spirit, behold the Magi, following the guidance of the star; they seek the Saviour of the world to tender Him their homage and adoration.

Second Prelude: O Jesus, true Light, come to enlighten our darkness; let us comprehend the great benefit of the gift of faith, that, with grateful love, we may discharge the duties it imposes on us.

First Point

THIS FEAST, A REMINDER OF THE GREAT BLESSING OF THE GIFT OF FAITH

Because our Divine Saviour, by manifesting Himself to the Gentiles, revealed Himself to the whole world, the Church calls this feast Epiphany—revelation of the Lord. We commemorate, therefore, the call of all Gentile peoples to the faith in Christ, Jesus. The Magi, the first-called among the Gentiles, came to Bethlehem to adore the new-born King of the Jews and the Light of the Gentiles, the Saviour of the world, and by the mysterious

offering of gold, frankincense and myrrh, to confess their faith in His royal power, in His Divine Majesty, and in His Humanity. The wonderful star, which they beheld with joy and astonishment, and which announced to them the birth of the Saviour, Who would rise out of Jacob (4 Mos. 24, 17), was the mystic type of the light of faith, which, through the Apostles and their successors, was to illumine the darkness of heathendom.

Were not the interior light of grace, which enlightened them as to the significance of this heavenly sign, and the inner promptings which moved them to heed its invitation, harbingers of those abundant graces with which God soon would flood the earth to lead all pagan nations to Christ? "Let us, therefore," says Pope Leo the Great, "recognize our first call to the true faith and celebrate the dawning of our blessed hope and exultation, in the three kings who adored Christ." Let us rejoice in the fulfillment of the glorious prophecy of Isaias: "Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem, for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (Is. 60, 1). For us, too, the glory of the Lord, the God-Man, has risen; for us, too, grace and salvation stream in abundance from the new Sion, the Catholic Church.

Do I frequently thank the Lord for my call to the true faith? What have I done in the past, to prove my gratitude? What will I do in the future?

Second Point

THE DUTIES IMPOSED UPON US BY OUR CALL TO THE TRUE FAITH

Through our call to the faith in Christ, Jesus, we become members of His Holy Church and, as such, we

participate in the bountiful fruits of the Redemption, upon which rest our sole happiness in life, our consolation in death, and our hope for eternity. How great must be our gratitude for a grace of such inestimable worth! What a strict duty does it enjoin upon us of manifesting our gratitude in deeds, by regulating our lives in accordance with the spirit and the principles of faith. Without our co-operation, the gift of faith should only add to our responsibility.

The spirit of faith elevates and ennobles man, and renders all his actions meritorious in the sight of God. It teaches us to pray with reverence and attention, to be solicitous in the discharge of our duties. Faith inspires us with love, meekness and patience in bearing with the faults of others. It makes us humble and resigned in pain and mishap, generous and detached in happiness. Happy the souls possessing this spirit of faith!

Furthermore, the grace of the true faith imposes upon us the sacred duty of co-operating to the best of our ability in the propagation and extension of faith. How many souls will thus attain to intimate knowledge and love of Jesus Christ! Let us pray the Lord to send many zealous laborers into His vineyard. Let us offer our Holy Communions and good works to implore the grace of faith for those who sit in the darkness of infidelity and heathendom. How could we claim to love Jesus and still be indifferent to the perdition of so many souls for whom He shed His most Precious Blood?

Affections: O Jesus, Thou Divine Light of the world, I thank Thee for my call to the true faith, to Thy Holy Church. I adore Thee on this day with the holy Magi, in the poverty and lowliness of Thy Sacred Humanity. I behold Thee, concealed beneath the veil of faith, on

our altars. But, is my faith also as lively, and are my sentiments as noble as were those of the three Kings? Animate and strengthen my weak faith, O Jesus, that from this day forward I may live in accordance with the spirit of faith, generously co-operating with Thy grace, and thus merit to behold Thee in Thy glory for all eternity.

Resolution: I will often thank God for the call to the true faith.

Spiritual Bouquet: "The just man liveth by faith."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 7TH

THE OBEDIENCE OF THE MAGI TO THE GUIDANCE OF THE STAR

"And behold, the star, which they had seen in the east, went before them until it came and stood over where the Child was" (Matt. 2, 9).

First Prelude: Behold the Magi on their tiresome and fatiguing journey, following the guidance of he star.

Second Prelude: O Divine Saviour, Who dost teach us in the obedience of the Magi, with what zeal we should correspond to Thy grace grant that we may fully comprehend and faithfully practice this great lesson.

First Point

THE MAGI FOLLOW THE LIGHT OF GRACE AT ONCE AND WITHOUT HESITATION

Our Saviour called the Magi to the crib, from the East, by a star which was to be their guide. At the same time, this star enlightened them interiorly, through the

light of grace, which impelled them powerfully to obey its summons. How faithful were these truly wise men to the promptings of grace! Hardly had they seen the star and recognized the Will of God in their regard, when without delay they made preparations for the journey which they commenced at once. "We have seen"—this is the preventing grace, which enlightens and speaks to the heart, and "We have come"—this is the ready acceptance and co-operation with grace. To know the Will of God and to fulfill it, are for them identical. In one moment, they pass from recognition to desire, from desire to determination, from determination to accomplishment.

What wisdom lies concealed beneath this ready acceptance of grace! What dangers, on the contrary, are implied in the idle neglect of grace! When God speaks, it would be an act of unfaithfulness to hesitate even for a moment; the least delay may be fraught with irreparable losses. St. Augustine says there are special moments of grace. If you hesitate, you run the risk of forfeiting it altogether. Or, are you perhaps of mind that the Lord will wait until it shall please you to accept the gifts of His love? How many, even countless, inspirations, are imparted to us in religious life, of which, alas, we hardly take notice! How often we can say with the Magi: "We have seen the star"—but dare we also add: "And we have followed the call?"

Oh, how the example of the Magi puts so many lukewarm, indifferent religious to shame, who offer stubborn resistance to the promptings of the Holy Spirit! How many, too, lag behind in their indifference, while they should and could be making rapid strides in perfection! Let us not defer the correction of our faults to a later day, idly making resolutions and not keeping them.

What does the grace of God require of me? Am I docile to the inspirations of grace?

SECOND POINT

THE MAGI FOLLOW THE LIGHT OF GRACE PERSEVERINGLY

What great difficulties were encountered by the Magi on their way to Bethlehem! What discomfitures had they to overcome! How many dangers to brave! The star led them into a strange country; and when they believed themselves to be at their destination, it suddenly disappeared. Neither Herod nor the inhabitants of Jerusalem, could give them the desired information concerning the new-born King of the Jews. This trial could neither shatter their courage nor make their faith waver. They humbly followed the directions given them through Holy Writ; the star re-appeared and after all the trials they found themselves amply and gloriously repaid for their perseverance, despite hardships and disappointments. Thus do noble and magnanimous souls love to act; surmounting all obstacles, they go directly to God; they know how to use violence, to deny themselves, to suffer, to fulfill their duties, heedless of the talk of men. They seek God, alone, and esteem all else as naught.

Do we act likewise? Do we not grow mutinous in hours of trial? We know that in the spiritual life hours will inevitably come when it would seem that God withdraws from the soul, and His presence is no longer felt. Do we, therefore, love Him the less, or are we in a lesser degree the object of His love? Not at all—God merely demands the sacrifice of natural tendencies and the crucifixion of self-love. Confiding in God, should we not

courageously penetrate these difficulties and this darkness? As soon as the honor of God and our salvation render it necessary, the sweet moments of perceptible grace will return; the star will reappear, and our joy will be the greater, the more sincere our humility and resignation were at its disappearance. Oh, how wise are souls who thus bear interior trials! What progress do they make and what merits can they accumulate!

Affections: How does the docility of the Magi to the guidance of the star put me to shame! How zealously and perseveringly did they seek Thee, my Jesus, and that, too, when the star had disappeared—they continued the search with the same longing and eagerness. Henceforth, I will always be prepared to fulfill the holy Will of God as soon as the star of faith bids me recognize it, without even a moment's hesitation, since my sanctification and eternal happiness may be dependent upon one moment, a single act of obedience. Have compassion, O Jesus, with my weakness; since Thou dost imbue me with the desire to be faithful to Thee, do Thou Thyself support my fidelity. May Thy grace, mighty in the weak, strengthen me in the time of tribulation, that I may praise and bless Thee, also at such times, by the perfect accomplishment of Thy holy Will, which shall henceforth constitute all my happiness!

Resolution: We will faithfully follow the promptings of grace and practice the virtues to which they incite us.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Draw me, O my God, and I will follow Thee in the odor of Thy ointments."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 8TH

THE GIFTS OF THE MAGI

"And entering into the house they found the Child, with Mary, His Mother, and falling down they adored Him; and opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh" (Matt. 2, 11).

First Prelude: Behold the Magi, prostrating themselves in adoration before the Child and offering their gifts.

Second Prelude: Replenish my heart with lively faith and burning love, O Jesus, that my offering, like that of the Magi, may be acceptable to Thee.

First Point

WITH WHAT SENTIMENTS DID THE MAGI OFFER THEIR GIFTS?

The gospel relates that after the Magi had adored the Child, they opened their treasures and offered gold, frankincense and myrrh. God guided them in the choice of their offerings, for according to the opinion of the divines, their gifts are mysteriously symbolical. As their King, they offered Him gold; as their God, frankincense; as Man, myrrh. Are not these gifts symbolical of the religious vows? The vow of poverty, through which religious renounce all earthly possessions, is symbolized by the gold. Obedience, whereby religious renounce their own will, and, as it were, consume themselves in the service of God, is symbolized by the incense. The vow of chastity, because of the constant practice of mortification which it enjoins, is symbolized by the myrrh.

How happy should we esteem ourselves to be chosen

by the Lord, like the Magi, to offer Him such precious gifts! Oh, that we were animated by the sentiments that filled their hearts! How acceptable should our offerings then be! With the profoundest humility, and regretting that they had not presents a thousand times more costly, the Magi offered their gifts to the Divine Child. With what love and unconditional surrender did they consecrate themselves forever to the service of Him Whom they had recognized as their King, their God and Redeemer!

On the day of our vows we, too, consecrated ourselves to the Lord, shouldered His sweet yoke and promised to carry it to the day of our death. Are we so generous toward our Bridegroom today, so willing to sacrifice, so full of burning zeal, as we were on the day of our profession? And if our fervor has waned we must diligently try to discover the cause. Our Lord says in Holy Scripture: "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold fire-tried, that thou mayest be made rich" (Rev. 3, 18). Let us immolate to the Lord a love that has been cleansed of the dross of self-love in the fires of tribulation, by mortification, by obedience and self-denial. Let it, at least, be our earnest endeavor to purify our soul more and more, from day to day, that our sacrifice may at all times be acceptable to the Lord.

Second Point

HOW THE DIVINE CHILD ACCEPTS THE GIFTS OF THE MAGI

If God values our gifts not according to their material worth, but according to the intensity of the love with which they are presented, how great must then have been the pleasure of the Divine Child in accepting the gifts of the Magi! How lovingly must He have rested His eyes

upon them and with what rare graces enriched their hearts! Father Nouet says that for the gold which they offered they received wonderful wisdom, which imparted to them the knowledge of the most sublime mysteries of faith. For the incense, the gift of prayer was bestowed upon them in most extraordinary measure, severing them wholly from the things of this world, and uniting them intimately with God. For the myrrh, He gave them knowledge of the cross, unfolded to them the value of suffering and imbued them with love of the cross. What sweet consolations permeated their interior, in virtue of which they experienced, in fullest measure, that the Lord gives Himself with all the love of His heart, in return for our gifts!

How consoling and encouraging are these considerations for us! Do they not call to mind the promises of our Lord that our smallest gifts, our most insignificant acts, even a glass of water given in His name, shall merit reward? Animated with this faith and encouraged by the words of Jesus, let us often renew the good intention, that all our actions may become more pleasing to God and thereby more meritorious.

O Divine Child, reveal also to me as Thou didst to the happy Magi, a few rays of Thy affability; the whole world shall then be as nothing to me—Thou alone shalt possess all my love.

Affections: With the holy Magi I kneel at Thy crib, O Jesus, and offer Thee my gifts, in the simplicity of my heart. I desire to present them at the throne of Thy mercy, with the deepest reverence, the purest intention and perfect love. Oh, give me the sentiments that Thou desirest of me: a heart, humble and contrite in the realization of its countless transgressions; a heart, consumed in

holy longing for Thee, finding its highest bliss in intercourse with Thee; a heart, penetrated with childlike gratitude for all the graces with which Thou hast overwhelmed it; a heart, desirous to pour out its thanksgiving in uninterrupted love of Thee. O Jesus, sanctify my heart with the wealth of Thy graces that I may love Thee as Thou deservest to be loved.

Resolution: We will often renew the immolation of our holy vows to the Divine Infant.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all He hath done for Thee."

Prayer: Jesus, my Lord, my King . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 9TH

THE MAGI RETURN TO THEIR OWN COUNTRY

"And having been warned in sleep that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their own country" (Matt. 2, 12).

First Prelude: In spirit behold the Magi, once more prostrating themselves in adoration before the Divine Child.

Second Prelude: Grant us grace, O Jesus, to value ever more the happiness of frequently communing with Thee in prayer, that we may stake all to derive great benefit from so salutary a practice.

First Point

THE MAGI LEAVE BETHLEHEM COMPLETELY TRANSFORMED INTERIORLY

We may well say that the Magi did not come to Bethlehem unprepared. How faithfully did they co-oper-

ate with the light of grace vouchsafed them simultaneously with the appearance of the star! How great was their desire, their faith, their hope, their love and perseverance! In childlike simplicity and humility, they prostrated themselves before the Divine Child, in Whom they recognized not only the King of the Jews, but their God and the Saviour of the world.

Their hearts resembled the field spoken of in the gospel, which yielded fruit a hundred-fold. Though the sweet presence of the Holy Child and His Blessed Mother was theirs but for a short time, what a treasure of heavenly light, of love and grace was imparted to them! How gladly would they have spent their whole life in the company of Jesus and Mary! But the Will of God, manifested to them in sleep, bade them return to their own country, and so they departed from Bethlehem with the same fidelity and ready obedience with which they had followed the directions of the star.

Oh, the wonderful effects of intimate union with Jesus, the Author of all sanctity! And we, who, perhaps, for many years have lived close to Jesus in holy religion, and so frequently receive Him in Holy Communion, do not profit by such intimacy! Do we not come in contact with the self-same God Who effected such a wonderful transformation in the hearts of the Magi? Oh, we are lacking in living faith and active love. We approach the sacred mysteries with slight preparation, and are, therefore, not worthy of the plenitude of graces reserved for fervent souls.

Let us examine ourselves seriously to see what hinders us from deriving the proper fruit from our frequent intercourse with Jesus in the various religious exercises.

Second Point

THE MAGI RETURN HOME BY ANOTHER WAY, AND ANNOUNCE THE MERCIES OF THE LORD

Having been warned in sleep, the Magi returned by another road to their own country. Their hearts were aglow with love and gratitude for the mercies of the Lord and they burned with the desire to proclaim to others the salvation which they had found. How eager were they to spread, in their own country, the spirit of Christ imparted to them so generously—the spirit of humility, poverty, mortification—the spirit of love, meekness, and self-immolation! Full of apostolic zeal, they fructified and confirmed their efforts to spread the knowledge of Christ by the sanctity of their lives. Such are the effects of grace in souls that have removed all impediments and, hence, correspond faithfully to the designs of God.

Two important lessons suggest themselves here. First, having found God, we should no longer walk as before, but like the Magi, enter upon a new and better life. Is our spiritual progress always commensurate with the many graces and enlightenments so frequently imparted to us in the sacred tribunal of Penance? Are we more zealous in the discharge of our vocational duties; is our faith more animated and humble; are we more sincere in the practice of charity, more devout in prayer, than before? Secondly, the Magi teach us the necessity of sharing our spiritual treasures with others. We, too, should become stars, enlightening others, instructing and leading them to God. Has not the Saviour said: "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in heaven" (Matt. 5, 16)? Oh, how much good can religious effect who, animated with

the spirit of God, discharge the duties of their state of life with the utmost fidelity!

Affections: O Divine Child, Thou art in truth a holy magnet, attracting all hearts to Thee and holding them fast with amiable power. Thou didst draw the Magi through the bright star and the light of Thy grace. How precious the gifts of grace with which Thou didst enrich their souls! I, too, long for the heavenly gifts of Thy love and mercy, O my Divine Saviour. I, too, wish to serve Thee with renewed fervor, with generosity and complete abandonment of self. Thou hast given me the desire, give me also the strength and courage to subjugate my passions, patiently and with resignation to bear all misfortunes and afflictions, and, like the holy Magi, let me incite many souls to the practice of virtue by the light of my good example, that under the sweet reign of Thy love they may find true happiness in glorifying Thy name.

Resolution: I will frequently renew the resolve to perform my devotional exercises with greater fervor.

Spiritual Bouquet: "They went back another way into their own country."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 10TH

THE BLESSED MOTHER OF GOD BRINGS HER DIVINE CHILD TO THE TEMPLE

"And after the days of her purification were accomplished, according to the law of Moses, they carried Him, to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord" (Luke 2, 22-23).

First Prelude: Behold the Blessed Mother of God, bearing her Divine Child in her arms, humbly waiting in the court of the Temple for the high-priest.

Second Prelude: O holy Mother of God, obtain for me grace to comprehend and imitate thy sublime example of virtue.

First Point

MARY FULFILLS THE LAW PERFECTLY

Recognizing it as the expression of God's holy Will, our Blessed Mother was eager to fulfill the Mosaic law in its minutest details. When, therefore, the forty days were accomplished, she hastened to bring her Child to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Most High, and to offer the customary ransom. This act was but the expression of her lively faith, her profound humility and submission to the Divine Law. At every manifestation of the Divine Will, she repeated with her whole heart: "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to Thy word" (Luke 1, 38).

She hurried to the Temple, there in the presence of God, Who in a special manner dwelt in the Holy of Holies, to acknowledge publicly and solemnly her profound faith and trust in the Almighty. In a spirit of gratitude she attributed all, especially her supernatural greatness and the blessed fruit of her womb, to the infinite goodness and liberality of God. She referred all honor to Him Who had regarded the humility of His handmaid, and elevated her to the dignity of the Mother of God, Who united in her spotless Virginity with the most exalted Maternity. Mary hastened to the Temple to immolate to the heavenly Father, without reserve, her-

self and her Divine Son, surrendering the Holy Child irrevocably to the designs of Divine Wisdom and Love.

Such were the sentiments with which she made her offering, such, the sentiments with which she laid her Divine Child into the arms of the high-priest, to become the property of the human race, our property; and with such sentiments she again redeemed Him. Oh, with what complacency did the eye of the heavenly Father rest upon this holy Virgin, who fulfilled His law so perfectly! What an abundance of grace must this oblation have drawn down upon the soul of Mary! If we wish to be true children of our holy Mother, then, above all, we must imitate her perfect obedience, for children must resemble their mother. We have promised to fulfill the law of God, to keep our vows and our Holy Rule.

Let us ask ourselves, earnestly, how we have thus far acquitted ourselves of our sacred obligations. "God," says St. Teresa, "demands of a soul that wishes to love Him, nothing but obedience." Let us, then, in imitation of our Blessed Mother, consecrate ourselves anew and without reserve to the practice of obedience.

Second Point

MARY SUBMITTED TO A LAW NOT BINDING ON HER

Mary, the most pure Virgin, was without sin, consequently not subject to a law binding only ordinary women. In spite of her many prerogatives, in spite of her virginal fruitfulness, in spite of her sublime dignity as Mother of God, Mary willed to give us an example of obedience to the precepts of the law. Reverence for the Lawgiver had completely mastered her soul. Mary's deep humility exacted obedience even in the minutest details to a law

that in no way applied to the most pure Mother of God. She maintains a modest reserve and makes the prescribed offering as if she were an ordinary mother. What a beautiful example! What a lesson for us to obey without desiring to be observed or displaying the advantages that may distinguish us; without urging pretexts and excuses behind which self-love is wont to seek cover. Oh, that like Mary, we had always observed the commands of God with exactitude! True obedience accomplishes in all simplicity what is enjoined, regardless of personal considerations or advantages. While it never seeks exceptions to the general observances, it accepts them when imposed, but desires them only in so far as duty makes them obligatory.

What is my obedience when compared with that of my holy Mother? Frequently, my pretexts are only apparently justified. When shall we, like Mary, seek all our honor in the honor of God, in obedience to Him, in being known to Him alone! Mary joins the ranks of the sinful daughters of Adam, and the high-priest performs the sacred rite over her as over every other mother. God knows her purity and that suffices for Mary; what men think of her, is of little concern to her. How unlike our heavenly Mother have we not been when we took cognizance of the praise and esteem of men, or through fear of their censure, neglected our duties! My heavenly Mother teaches me to despise the judgments of men, to seek God alone in all my actions and omissions, to see only God and His holy Will in the directions of my superiors, and to love and esteem whatever may be humiliating in such directions.

Affections: O Mary, what a sublime example dost thou set me in this mystery! Thou wert not obliged to

the fulfillment of this law, and yet thou didst subject thyself with greatest promptness to its precepts. Thou knewest that it was the Will and pleasure of God, and more was not needed to make thee obey cheerfully. How does thy wonderful obedience shame my negligence in the observance of our Holy Rule! How often have I, blinded by self-love, esteemed even my sacred duty as trivial! O holy Virgin, obtain for me the grace of true humility of heart that I may elude the snares of vanity and human respect, and by the practice of perfect submission, attain to true sanctity.

Resolution: I will perform all my actions in the spirit of submission.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord! Be it done unto me according to thy word!"

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 11TH

THE PRESENTATION OF JESUS

"They carried Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord; and to offer a sacrifice according as it is written in the law of the Lord" (Luke 2, 22, 24).

First Prelude: Behold the Divine Child, immolating Himself to the Eternal Father by the hands of the high-priest.

Second Prelude: O my Divine Saviour, replenish my heart with a genuine spirit of self-immolation, that I may anew and without reserve consecrate myself to Thy service.

First Point

THE SACRIFICE JESUS OFFERS HIS HEAVENLY FATHER BY THE IMMOLATION OF HIMSELF

While Mary immolates her Divine Son to the Most High, Jesus offers Himself to His heavenly Father with the generosity and the eagerness of love that counts no cost. At the moment of the Incarnation, He had offered Himself unreservedly for those whom He loves. "Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not; but a body Thou hast fitted to Me. Holocausts for sin did not please Thee. Then said I: "Behold, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Hebr. 10, 5-7). It is the desire to make His sacrifice a solemn and public one, that brings Him to the Temple today. Humbling Himself before the Divine Majesty, He adores His heavenly Father with profoundest reverence and offers Himself as common oblation in the name of all creation. The heavenly Father looked upon the sacrifice of His only begotten Son with infinite pleasure, and accepted it as redounding to His glory in greater measure than all the sacrifices of the old Law.

When Jesus offered Himself as Head of the mystical Body of which we are members, He immolated all those who are His, or will in future belong to Him. But we must personally confirm and corroborate the act through which Jesus offered us to God. In the face of Christ's Divine Sacrifice who should not say with his whole heart: "Ah, my God, I am wholly Thine, I will serve Thee"? Since religious enjoy the happiness of being Thine in a more perfect sense than ordinary Christians, their self-surrender must be without defect. I may no longer seek self, nourish self-will, yield to sensuality and natural tendencies. Whether I am distinguished or made nothing of,

whether I am remembered or forgotten, praised or blamed, I am no longer my own—I am wholly Thine, dear Lord. May Thy Will dispose of every day of my life as it pleaseth Thee; I will never complain, but always adore and praise Thy holy Will.

Second Point

THE LOVE WITH WHICH JESUS IMMOLATES HIMSELF

The love of Christ was two-fold: love for His heavenly Father, and love for us. Jesus had come to restore the honor of God and to offer reparation to the Divine Justice. With this sublime purpose in view, He offers Himself with the most ardent desire and burning love, with unreserved surrender of Self. His love for His creatures urges Him to redeem them from sin and hell and reopen heaven for them. By His sacrifice on Calvary, He would satisfy the two-fold demand of His love. But such delay was painful to His tenderly loving Heart. Even on the fortieth day after His birth he appeared before His heavenly Father as universal Victim, to make atonement for the sins of the whole world. O mystery of infinite Love! Men are so unworthy of Him—at His entrance into the world they refuse to receive Him, persecute Him and seek His life. He foresees what yet awaits Him—bitter sufferings, humiliations, and privations. But the ardor of His love nothing daunted, He offers His sacred head even now, one day to wear the cruel crown of thorns; His hands and feet, to be pierced with nails —His entire sacred Body, to suffer the martyrdom of the scourging and the crucifixion. He offers His Soul to be satiated with opprobrium; His most loving heart, to be opened for us by the soldier's spear.

My dear Lord and Saviour, how ardently didst Thou love me on the day of Thy Presentation! How admirably dost Thou teach me the power of love that captivates the whole heart! Ah, I realize that true love of God and of neighbor renders us capable of the greatest sacrifices; and only hearts that do not love are cowardly and narrow. Oh, inflame my heart with the purest love for God and for my neighbor, that I, too, may desire no greater happiness than to offer and consume myself in Thy holy service, and through my life of immolation for souls, to gain many of them to Thy merciful love.

Affections: Thanksgiving and joy fill my heart, when I consider the great act Thou didst achieve on the day of Thy Presentation. As the one oblation worthy to atone for sin and to render us deserving of the divine pleasure, Thou didst immolate Thyself to the heavenly Father. Behold, O Jesus, I, too, offer myself unreservedly and forever, with all my faults and imperfections, as an oblation to Thy merciful love. By Thy grace strengthen my soul, that I may accept willingly and cheerfully the crosses imposed upon me for my sanctification, that cleansed in the fires of divine love, I may be found worthy one day to be presented to Thee in the temple of Thy glory.

Resolution: I will perform all my actions in the spirit of love and immolation.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Behold, I come to do Thy Will, O my God!"

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 12TH

THE AGED SIMEON AND THE PROPHETESS ANNA IN THE TEMPLE

"And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was in him. And he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. And he came by the Spirit into the temple." —"And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser; she was far advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity. And she was a widow until fourscore and four years; who departed not from the temple, by fastings and prayers serving night and day. Now she, at the same hour, coming in, confessed to the Lord; and spoke of Him to all who looked for the redemption of Israel" (Luke 2, 25-27; 36, 38).

First Prelude: Behold Mary and Joseph, and the Prophetess Anna, gathered round the aged Simeon, who holds in his arms the "Christ of the Lord."

Second Prelude: Give me grace, O Jesus, to learn a lesson from each one of these holy souls.

First Point

CONTEMPLATE THE HOLY SIMEON

Holy Writ says of him that he was just, pious, feared God, that he was full of the Holy Spirit, and waited for the Consolation of Israel. What glorious praise of his consummate holiness! Simeon was just and feared God—in other words, he possessed all virtues, solicitously

avoided sin, and awaited the Consolation of Israel—detached from all earthly things, he longed for nothing in this world save the happiness of seeing Jesus before his death. The Holy Ghost was with Simeon. In all his actions, thoughts, and sentiments he was guided by the Holy Spirit, Who constantly dwelt within, and to Whose every inspiration Simeon was faithful.

What a beautiful example for souls consecrated to the service of God! Simeon's holy desires won for him the assurance that he should not die till he had seen the Saviour of the world. How pleasing to God must have been the pious longing of the aged Simeon! "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty" (Isaias 33, 17). As reward for his eager longing for the Messiah, Simeon had most likely received a divine intimation to the effect that he should not die till his desire had been fulfilled. Full of joy, Simeon hastens to the temple this blessed morning, and beholds there Mary with the Divine Child in her arms, Who differs in no way from other children. Enlightened by the Holy Ghost, Simeon penetrates the veil and recognizes in this helpless Child the Word made Flesh, the Expected for four thousand years. What may Simeon have felt as he held in his arms, and pressed close to his bosom, the "Christ of the Lord!" Full of joy and delight, he raises his eyes to heaven, and with a loud voice acclaims the mercies of the Lord. Oh, what bliss flooded his soul in that moment,—with what graces was it overwhelmed! What a glorious recompense for his long life of faithful service in the Temple of God! There now remains for him but the wish to die, to be able for all eternity to extol the mercies of the Lord.

In Holy Communion, we have the inexpressible happiness of not only holding the same Christ in our embrace,

and pressing Him to our heart, but of taking full possession of Him, as the promised Salvation, and the pledge of everlasting life. Let us receive Him each morning with the lively faith, the longing and the holy love of Simeon. "Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the requests of thy heart" (Ps. 36, 4).

Second Point

LET US CONTEMPLATE THE PROPHETESS ANNA

Anna was the daughter of Phanuel and a prophetess. We read in the gospel that she received, and in turn announced, the revelations of the Holy Ghost. The sanctity of her life was in perfect harmony with the distinguished grace imparted to her by the Holy Spirit. The more she had died to the world and the flesh during the years of her widowhood, the more generously had the life of grace unfolded itself and fructified her soul. To abstinence, she joined the greatest zeal in the service of God, mortification, and prayer. So frequently did she appear in the Temple to praise God, and to implore heaven to send the Messiah, that in the words of the evangelist, she "Departed not from the Temple." Little wonder, then, that God's especial pleasure rested upon this holy widow, and that before so many others she was vouchsafed the rare happiness of recognizing the Messiah in the Son of the Virgin Mary. Full of holy joy, she saw and contemplated this Divine Child and breaking forth in ecstasies of gratitude and exultation, gave public testimony of the Son, glorifying God.

Let us imitate the fervor and zeal of this holy widow. With holy joy, let us too, go to the temple, to the dwelling

place of our dear Saviour, as often as our Holy Rule and our duties permit it. Let us adore Him with profound reverence, that we may be worthy, through the devotion to His Sacred Heart, to receive the marks of His especial favor and love. The gospel adds: "She spoke of Him to all that looked for the redemption of Israel." Inundated with the consolation that filled her holy soul, she held herself bound to inform all her acquaintances and to imbue their hearts with love of Jesus. If love of Jesus has taken full possession of our heart, our conversations will, likewise, be animated by the Holy Ghost, and we will incessantly strive to impart knowledge of His love to others, that they, too, may enjoy the happiness we have found in the footsteps of our Divine Saviour.

When religious observance calls me to the house of God, do I respond cheerfully and zealously? Is it my aim to edify others by means of my conversations?

Affections: What worthy models of true sanctity do I behold in the pious Simeon and the prophetess Anna! Replenished with the Holy Spirit, they led a supernatural, holy life. I, too, am called to such a life, but, alas, I am lacking in faithful co-operation with the graces imparted to me so plentifully, daily and hourly, in religion. Oh, that my heart would no longer resist the promptings of the Holy Ghost, Who would lead me to perfection! Pardon, O my God—I am sorry for having resisted Thy enlightenments in the past, by means of which Thou wouldst advance me in virtue and perfection. From this day forward, I will walk faithfully in Thy holy presence and by prayer and mortification endeavor to render myself worthy of Thy especial grace and friendship.

Resolution: In all my actions, I will be guided by the spirit and the principles of faith.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word in peace."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 13TH

THE PROPHECY OF SIMEON

"Behold this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted" (Luke 2, 34).

First Prelude: Behold Mary and Joseph wrapt in admiration, listening to the prophecy of Simeon.

Second Prelude: Replenish my heart, O Jesus, with a wholesome fear of the smallest imperfection, that I may be preserved from the danger of committing graver faults.

First Point

THE WORDS: "THIS CHILD IS SET FOR THE FALL OF MANY IN ISRAEL"

Holding the Divine Child in his arms, the aged Simeon, wrapt in ecstasies of joy and love, praises God with a loud voice in a canticle wherein he calls the Saviour the "Light of Nations," the "Glory of Israel" and the "Salvation of the people." Turning to Mary, he adds the prophecy: "This Child is set for the fall of many in Israel" (Luke 2, 34). How can this be? The Messiah Who wills to save all men, will be the occasion for the loss of many souls! What a sad mystery the Holy Ghost revealed to the aged Simeon in these words! Oh, how seriously should we ponder this mystery! St. Peter says: "Jesus is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of scandal to

them that stumble at the word, neither do believe, whereunto also they are set" (Peter 2, 8).

How many have there been at all times to whom Christ is, indeed, a stumbling block! By resisting the mercies of the Lord, and abusing the means of salvation offered them, they are the more culpable and, in consequence, unhappy. The fault does not lie with our dear Saviour; He would save all and render all eternally happy. Yet, "He came unto His own and His own received Him not" (John 1, 11). They heeded not His words, but rejected Him. These are the voluntarily blind of whom Jesus says: "If you were blind, you should not have sin; but now you say: we see. Your sin remaineth" (John 9, 41). Oh, how true are these words of the Son of God! He, whom the infinite Mercy does not justify, remains in sin to his own destruction! Oh, that these terrible words might not apply to religious! And yet, there are some, even among these preferred souls, who, utterly disregarding the sanctity of their holy state, abuse the means of grace so generously offered them. Christ's merciful Heart is consumed with love and longing for their salvation. He waits for their conversion, urges them with loving violence to come to Him. If they obstinately resist, then such unfaithful souls coerce the Lord, contrary to His Will, to proceed against them with all the rigors of Divine Justice.

Do I deserve reproach for my abuse of graces, especially in little things?

Second Point

THE WORDS: "THIS CHILD SHALL BE A SIGN FOR CONTRADICTION"

"Christ Crucified," says St. Paul, "is unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness"

(Cor. 1, 23). The children of the world today offer the same resistance to His words and example. All about Him is the object of ridicule and scorn on the part of the godless and indifferent. How must it grieve the Heart of our Blessed Lord to meet with resistance in souls whom He has distinguished by special privileges, whom He has enrolled among His beloved spouses! Were the Heart of Jesus in Its glorified condition susceptible of pain, He should suffer the most cruel wounds at the hands of His friends. No, my Jesus, never shalt Thou be a sign for contradiction to us. Rather will we choose Thee for a sign to follow, making it our constant aim. We will incessantly by the darts of our fervent desires and love tend toward Thy Divine Heart. We will aim to glorify Thee by our conversations, and in all our actions seek Thy divine pleasure. Christ shall be for us a sign of salvation.

Let us earnestly examine ourselves as to what degree of resemblance to our dear Lord, our Divine Model, we have attained. Jesus loves poverty, fatigue, humility, meekness and patience. He never sought self, but always the honor of His Father and the salvation of mankind. He found delight in solitude and prayer, endured contempt and insults silently and patiently, even prayed for His enemies. Am I a worthy disciple of my loving Saviour? O Jesus, how often must I confess that my words, indeed, speak my love while my actions testify to the contrary. My conduct is in constant disharmony with Thy holy teachings and example. I entreat Thee, O Jesus, remove from my heart all traces of resistance to Thy holy Will.

Affections: O Jesus, Salvation of the whole world, of Gentiles as well as Jews, to Thee we owe the light of faith and the hope of eternal salvation. Thou hast called all

to the possession of these inestimable treasures, but not all answer Thy loving invitation. "They love darkness more than the light" (John 4, 19). O Jesus, suffer me not to resist the principles, the spirit of Thy holy doctrine. Grant me that steadfast and constant fidelity which urges me to live as Thy true disciple in the face of the world and its contradictions. I pray Thee, do not take Thy hand from me, for Thou knowest how miserable and inconstant I am. I am in need of Thy divine assistance to walk worthy of my holy vocation.

Resolution: I will observe even the smallest regulations conscientiously.

Spiritual Bouquet: "This Child shall be a sign for contradiction."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 14TH

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

"The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in sleep, saying: 'Arise, take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt and be there until I shall tell thee, for it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him'" (Matt. 2, 13).

First Prelude: Imagine the Holy Family, in obedience to the angel's bidding, preparing for the journey.

Second Prelude: O my Jesus, give me the grace of a living faith in Thy loving Providence, and humble resignation to all Its dispensations.

First Point

THE COMMAND TO FLY INTO EGYPT

How humiliating for the Son of God must have been the command given to St. Joseph, by the Most High, to fly to Egypt with Jesus and Mary. He should fly from a godless king, retire into a strange country! The Babe of Bethlehem, a fugitive from the anger of a miserable creature! Is such a command compatible with the infinite Majesty of the Lord of heaven and earth? Without doubt, no, when judging from a human standpoint. But let us learn to correct our judgment by viewing happenings from the vantage-ground of God's sacred designs. This command, no matter how degrading it may appear to us, redounds to the glory of God, to Whom nothing can afford more honor than the profound abasement of His Son, as we learn from the prophecies. Oh, the wisdom of Divine Providence! Not only does this command tend to the greater glory of God, but it tends, likewise, to the greater good of mankind. Pondering the wonderful example of their Lord and Saviour as He takes refuge in flight, must they not draw encouragement and comfort from this sublime mystery, for hours of bitter trial, when it would seem that God had forsaken them? What a lesson Jesus would teach souls consecrated to Him in particular! By means of the lowly occupations of their holy state which probably humiliate them in the eyes of the world, or even cause them to be looked upon with contempt, they honor the Divine Majesty, and draw down abundant graces for their own salvation and that of souls entrusted to them.

How meritorious in God's sight is close union with the sentiments of our dear Lord in hours of such trial!

In virtue of this union, we accept humiliations at the hand of our heavenly Father with Christ's sentiments and esteem them as precious treasures. Christ, our Exemplar, even chose them for His portion, as St. Paul says: "Let us look on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith, Who having joy set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame" (Hebr. 12, 2). Let us incessantly look on Jesus that His example may encourage us in the trials, which we encounter in this land of exile, on our way to our true home,

Do I consider humiliations, which wound self-love, as especial graces, by means of which Almighty God would have me sanctify myself?

Second Point

JESUS TEACHES US COMPLETE ABANDONMENT TO DIVINE PROVIDENCE IN THE TIME OF TRIALS

God permits persecutions to break in upon His well-beloved Son, Who, according to the prophecy of Simeon, is a sign for contradiction, but at the same time, He watches over the life of the Divine Child, sends His angel, and frustrates the plans of the godless king. Likewise, God deals with the just, even in our day. He has not bound Himself to exempt them from suffering and persecutions, but He watches over them, guides them through His lawful representatives and disposes all things so as best to further their interests. With the most perfect resignation, the Divine Child submits to the Will of His heavenly Father, announced by the angel and executed promptly by His holy foster-father. He suffers Himself to be guided and carried without resistance, having no other aim than

to be truly submissive and resigned to Divine Providence, and the solicitude of those entrusted with the charge of Him. How does such implicit trust put my disquietude to shame, perhaps, even my complaints and murmurs, when this same loving Providence enjoins or permits anything not according to my taste! Am I penetrated with the fact that God wills to test my faith, and that He has connected great graces with such trials? Am I not fully convinced that I will fare best in the place assigned to me by obedience, because God would have me there?

The ways the Lord would lead us are sacred: let us, therefore, fear nothing so much as to deviate from them. What calm and heavenly peace dwell in a soul who, having abandoned herself to Divine Providence with perfect surrender, submits cheerfully to the guidance of His representatives! God Himself will lead her safely through the trials of this life, and even in the midst of the most depressing tribulations, will flood her soul with that profound peace which is the fruit of a long-tried fidelity and self-denial.

Affections: The present life is a time of trial, yet, Thou, O Lord, dost not forsake Thine own, and rewardest with ineffable joy, every difficulty borne for love of Thee. Thou, Thyself, my Jesus, hast experienced this in that state of submission and abasement which Thou hast chosen for love of me. In the face of such humility and trust, could I still complain of the tribulations that I may have to suffer? Far be such ingratitude from me, O Jesus, —Thy loving Providence watches over me and directs all things unto good. How could I lose courage, even in the greatest difficulties, since I wish naught but to fulfill Thy holy and most amiable Will, made known to me through the directions of my superiors and my Holy Rule. By

blind obedience, steadfast faith, invincible patience and perfect confidence, I will strive to be worthy of the guidance of Thy loving paternal Providence.

Resolution: I will often excite acts of loving confidence in Divine Providence.

Spiritual Bouquet: "To them that love God all things tend to good."

Prayer: Jesus, my Lord, my King . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 15TH

THE OBEDIENCE OF ST. JOSEPH AND THE BLESSED MOTHER OF GOD

"An angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: 'Arise, and take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt' " (Matt. 2, 13).

First Prelude: Imagine the Holy Family starting out on their perilous journey in the middle of the night.

Second Prelude: Grant me grace, O Jesus, to understand the perfection of the obedience of St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother of God in this mystery, that I may zealously imitate their example.

First Point

THE OBEDIENCE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN AND ST. JOSEPH IS PROMPT AND READY

Having received the divine command through an angel, Joseph and Mary, without tarrying in the least, make preparations for the journey; they allow no time to elapse between the command and its execution. What ready obedience! So perfect is the submission of Joseph

and Mary, that they ask no questions, raise no objections, though, undoubtedly, the command must have seemed somewhat singular and difficult of execution. Trusting in Divine Providence, they are convinced that there is nothing better or more meritorious than to do the Will of God, in all places and circumstances.

Joseph, further, executes the command promptly, in all particulars, according to the angel's bidding, as the evangelist expressly states: "Arise, take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt," the angel had said to Joseph: "and he arose, took the Child and His Mother . . . and retired into Egypt" (Matt. 2, 13-14). Let us dwell for a moment on this beautiful example of perfect obedience!

What a sublime example of the religious obedience I have vowed! How often, alas, has my submission been wholly unlike the submission of Joseph and Mary! How imperfect is my obedience when my superiors enjoin something contrary to nature! Do I not raise objections, even give way to murmurs and complaints? Have I not, occasionally, deferred the execution of a more difficult order, or discharged it reluctantly, giving vent to complaints and murmurs? How much is there still defective in my obedience! True obedience, like that of Joseph and Mary, must rest on the foundation of an invincible faith, a firm hope and perfect love. Faith teaches me to recognize the holy Will of God in the dictates of my superiors, through whom God would guide me on the path of perfection. Hope keeps alive in my breast the spirit of genuine humility and submission, by holding out to me a rich heavenly recompense for everything done in virtue of obedience. Finally, perfect love must be the main-spring of obedience, for it alone can effect the immolation of what is

dearest to us, our own free will. In imitation of the sublime example set us by Joseph and Mary, let us sacrifice, irrevocably, our free will, our inclinations and our comforts.

Second Point

MARY AND JOSEPH OBEY COURAGEOUSLY AND CONQUER ALL OBSTACLES

Considering the obstacles that opposed the execution of the divine command, must we not marvel at the wonderful obedience of Joseph and Mary in the flight to Egypt? In the middle of the night, they must undertake a most dangerous journey without the slightest preparation. Their way led through an inhospitable wilderness; they had to bear the inclemency of the weather, the hardheartedness of men, lack of the very necessaries of life, and many other hardships. They must fly into Egypt, among a heathen people, enemies of the Jews, and there live in seclusion, suffering the greatest poverty and privations. As a further test, they were to remain in exile until the angel of the Lord would summon them back, for which summons, however, no time had been marked. What a trial! Has the obedience of a religious ever similar difficulties to overcome? Joseph and Mary do not examine the reasons why God acts in such a manner. They are convinced that He will provide for them, if they but execute His divine command. The thought that they were suffering such hardships to save the life of the Divine Child, was for Joseph and Mary a source of the sweetest consolation, and fortified them in the most bitter trials.

Oh, if in the trials that obedience entails upon us, we should always bear in mind that we labor for God

alone and for love of Him, that He will requite most generously every cross borne for love of Him, we, too, could exclaim with the Apostle: "I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4, 13). When actuated by the spirit of love, we find all our duties easy and sweet, and as we read in Holy Scripture, feel capable of achieving any victory in obedience. Without love, however, even the least trial seems to us an unbearable yoke. O Mary, O Joseph, obtain for us grace to imitate your perfect obedience and self-renunciation. Entreat for us a tender and ardent love of God, so that the trials that come over us may be a source of new graces.

Affections: I thank Thee, O Jesus, for the wonderful example of perfect obedience Thou gavest me in Thy holy Mother and Thy foster-father. How little have I imitated them in the past, in the exercise of the most important virtue of religious life! Alas, self-love has often blinded me to such an extent that I obeyed Thy representatives reluctantly, especially when their injunctions imposed a sacrifice. O my Jesus! With all my heart, I repent of my want of lively faith, which often has induced me to investigate the directions of my superiors. I repent of my negligence and tepid love, which caused self-restraint and the immolation of my own free will to appear so difficult. Henceforth it shall be my earnest endeavor, with the assistance of Thy grace, to fulfill Thy holy Will perfectly, submitting cheerfully to the guidance of those that hold Thy place in my regard. O Mary, O Joseph, obtain for me the grace to imitate your promptness, simplicity and self-immolation, in the accomplishment of the holy Will of God.

Resolution: With childlike simplicity I will be docile to my superiors for the love of God.

Spiritual Bouquet. "Behold, O my God, I am ready to do Thy will."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 16TH

THE HOLY FAMILY IN EGYPT

"An angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: 'Arise and take the Child and His mother, and fly into Egypt: and be there until I shall tell thee' " (Matt. 2, 13).

First Prelude: Represent to yourself the Holy Family arriving in Egypt and occupying a poor dwelling.

Second Prelude: O Jesus, teach me to bear sufferings meritoriously that they may become for me a source of graces.

First Point

THE SUFFERINGS OF THE HOLY FAMILY IN EGYPT

If every virtuous person considers it a great trial to be compelled to live among unbelievers and wicked people, the purest, holiest persons—our Divine Saviour, His holy Mother, and His holy foster-father, must have suffered immeasurably in Egypt among a godless nation buried in sin. Our Saviour, Who knew God perfectly and measured the shame and insult heaped upon Him, and Who longed to offer His life for the remission of sin, must have grieved profoundly to see these people practicing gross idolatry. What must not His tender Heart have suffered! Mary and Joseph shared His sufferings, because their hearts, aglow with love, were being consumed with zeal for souls. Another source of suffering for the

Holy Family was found in the bond of the most tender mutual affection. The compassionate Heart of Jesus felt doubly the sufferings of His holy Mother, and of his holy foster-father, who for love of Him bore the discomfiture of exile. Mary and Joseph, on the contrary, grieved inexpressibly to see the Divine Child suffer the direst poverty and deprivations of every sort, as well as neglect and even the contempt of men. But in the midst of all these trials the Holy Family enjoyed a quiet peace, poor, indeed, and unknown before men, but rich and dowered with grace in the sight of God, the objects of His divine pleasure. In the midst of idolatry and superstition the Holy Family renders God the purest service and the most perfect homage. Amid a wicked and godless people, Jesus, Mary and Joseph distinguish themselves by the practice of all virtues.

What lessons of sanctity does the Holy Family teach us in all places and conditions of life! Let us endeavor to be hidden, humble and recollected in union with our Divine Saviour, and we will not fail to edify our neighbor, to prevent scandal and to spread the sweet odor of Christ everywhere by the practice of virtue. Let us patiently bear the reverses and privations which are ordinarily inseparable from the faithful discharge of the duties of our vocation. Let us not desire rest and comfort in this life, for we must labor, suffer and struggle here, that we may hereafter find peace and everlasting bliss.

Second Point

CONSOLATIONS OF THE HOLY FAMILY

Our Divine Saviour suffered intensely in the flight and during His sojourn in Egypt, but these sufferings by reason

of the great good that they should bring mankind, were not without comfort for the Heart that so loved men. He did not work miracles, it is true, but His prayers, tears and privations, were the seed that should in time yield the richest harvest of graces. Egypt was the land where Christianity flourished most, as we read in the Fathers of the Church. Its solitude was peopled with holy hermits. There lived in the desert a St. Anthony, a St. Paul and a St. Macarius, and many others. The monks and consecrated virgins led there a holy life which resembled that of the angels. St. Chrysostom likens Egypt to paradise, when he says: "The monks and virgins who have glorified Egypt by their sanctity, are more numerous than the stars of the heavens." Such was the magnitude of the graces which the Divine Child prepared in silence for this people that had fallen so low. Of Christ's advent in Egypt the prophet has foretold: "Behold the Lord will ascend upon a swift cloud, and will enter into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence" (Is. 19, 1). This light cloud is the sacred Humanity of our Lord, which veils the splendor of the Divine Majesty from the eyes of men. Mary and Joseph found comfort in sorrows and tribulation in the presence of the Divine Child. The Son of God, the Saviour of the world, their one and highest love and, hence, their greatest comfort, was with them. We may here apply the words of the Imitation: "When Jesus is present, all goes well and nothing seems difficult; but when Jesus is absent, everything is hard . . . If Jesus be with thee, no enemy can hurt thee. Whosoever finds Jesus, finds a good treasure, yea, good above all goods" (Bk. 2, chap. 8).

Let us then not fear to go in the company of Jesus to Egypt, that is, to the place to which holy obedience

assigns us, and where we, perhaps, shall find hardships, privations, and all manner of reverses. Let us suffer for love of Him, in union with His holy sentiments, and our sufferings and sacrifices will yield fruits of salvation and perfection for our own souls, and fruits of grace for the souls of those entrusted to us. If our hearts are filled with love of God and zeal for souls, we shall find in these considerations a source of joy and consolation.

Affections: For the love of poor sinners, O Divine Child, Thou didst will to suffer persecution and exile. Thou wouldst show us that no one can be perfectly happy on earth, because we are all but pilgrims and strangers. But despite the manifold hardships of this present life, it is by Thy grace very meritorious, and has been made bearable for us poor mortals by Thy example and that of the saints. For our encouragement Thou dost show us the glorious fruits of the patient bearing of trials. Let not one of Thy spouses seek consolation in the things of this world, and thus be detained from following Thee. O Mary and Joseph, lead us through the imitation of your virtues to Jesus.

Resolution: In all trials and tribulations I will seek consolation in God alone.

Spiritual Bouquet: Give me but Thy grace, and it sufficeth me.

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 17TH

THE RETURN FROM EGYPT

"But when Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in Egypt, saying: 'Arise, and take the Child and His mother and go into the land of

Israel, for they are dead that sought the life of the Child' " (Matt. 2, 19-20).

First Prelude: Picture the Holy Family, returning from Egypt.

Second Prelude: Give me grace, O my Saviour, to realize the necessity of being guided in all things solely by the light and principles of faith.

First Point

THE HOLY FAMILY SET OUT ON THEIR HOMEWARD JOURNEY

Fully resigned to the holy Will of God, Mary and Joseph started on their homeward journey, with the same readiness with which they had gone to Egypt. They had not once longed for their time of exile to be shortened; had it been the Will of God, they would cheerfully have endured the hardships and sufferings of their sojourn in Egypt yet longer. Had the angel not said to Joseph: "Be there until I shall tell Thee?" (Matt. 2, 13). Consequently, he abandoned himself entirely to the guidance of Divine Providence.

What a model he is for interior souls! God speaks to them incessantly, be it through the Church or their superiors, or through virtuous thoughts, pious desires and inspirations, which are an aid to the faithful discharge of the duties of their holy state. We will learn from the example of the Holy Family to entrust ourselves to Divine Providence where and under what circumstances, it shall please God to place us through our superiors, who represent God Himself in our regard. It may seem difficult, well-nigh impossible, to adapt ourselves to new surroundings, but let us resist this first impression vigor-

ously. After some effort, the victory will be ours. Would it not be dangerous, therefore, to entertain wishes concerning changes in our position or our office? Such desires spring from inconstancy aided by self-will and pure imagination. In order to detach them from earthly things and ground them in virtue it pleases the Lord frequently to try His elect in this regard. "Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6, 33). We shall, probably, receive more than we dare hope for, and from a source whence we least expect it. The measure of our surrender to God and our trust in Him will always be for Him the measure of His graces and favors.

What is my conduct when obedience directs me to leave places or occupations grown dear to me, or to do what is contrary to nature?

SECOND POINT

THE HOLY FAMILY CHOOSE TO DWELL AT NAZARETH

According to the directions of the angel, the Holy Family should go to the land of Israel, but the exact spot was not designated. St. Joseph dreads to return to Judea because Archelaus now reigned in the place of his father Herod. He seeks the necessary light in his doubt with God in fervent prayer, and receives the direction, in sleep, to repair to the country of Galilee.

Let us learn, from the example of St. Joseph, always to act circumspectly, and, in all doubts before making a decision, after mature deliberation, to have recourse to humble, fervent prayer. Though we may luckily have eluded one danger or conquered one temptation, we dare not, on that account, believe ourselves secure. Other

dangers, other temptations may break in upon us, for the enemies of our salvation offer us no truce. We will, therefore, proceed cautiously and with a wholesome fear, so as to evade the snares spread for us by the wily serpent. If we notice danger, let us not presumptuously precipitate ourselves headlong into it, for, who loves danger shall perish in it. If, however, duty requires us to expose ourselves, then let us be armed with prayer and trust in God. Having received the direction to go to Galilee, the Holy Family choose the little, insignificant town of Nazareth for their home. Here, in silence and seclusion, Jesus wished to pass His youth. He always chose the lowly and unpretentious for Himself and imbued His holy Mother and His foster-father with His sentiments.

Can I claim to resemble Jesus, my Model and Exemplar? Do I not strive to elude humiliations instead of utilizing them to my advantage? Am I not immoderately concerned and solicitous for my honor? What insults should I, Thy spouse and disciple, offer Thee, my Divine Saviour, if in the religious state, in the garb of humility, I would tolerate in my heart the desire for honor and recognition!

Affections: What gratitude do I owe Thee, O my Jesus, for having set me in Thy life on earth, so many beautiful examples. Thy life is the way on which through patience and self-denial, we come to Thee. Who art our crown. Hadst Thou not gone before, and left us Thy example to guide us, how many, alas, would remain far behind, since even now, we are so lukewarm and negligent. O my Jesus, give me an ever greater understanding of Thy holy doctrine, that it may impel me to more fervent imitation of Thy patience and humility. Above all, give me Thy holy love, that guided by it through this

earthly exile, I may attain to Thee, beloved Saviour, in my heavenly home.

Resolution: In all circumstances I will be guided solely by the principles of faith.

Spiritual Bouquet: "The just man liveth by faith."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 18TH

THE HOLY FAMILY GOES TO JERUSALEM TO CELEBRATE THE PASCH

"And His parents went every year to Jerusalem at the solemn day of the Pasch" (Luke 2, 41).

First Prelude: Behold the Holy Family at prayer in the Temple.

Second Prelude: Give me grace, O my God, rightly to comprehend and to imbibe the spirit of true piety.

First Point

THE HOLY FAMILY FULFILL THE LAW

On his return from Egypt, St. Joseph had feared to go to Jerusalem because Archelaus reigned there. Now, when there is question of fulfilling a duty prescribed by the law, he no longer fears, but thinks only of complying with the obligation. We should, likewise, never suffer human respect to hinder us in the discharge of our duties. We, too, may trust in God's protection and assistance, for He lovingly aids His creatures when they expose themselves to danger in the execution of His command. The evangelist observes that the Blessed Virgin, also, made the

journey, though women were not bound by the law. Mary's zeal was not satisfied with doing merely what was obligatory. It was her constant endeavor to promote the honor of God and her growth in sanctity, to edify her neighbor and incite him to good.

What a model for all who aim at perfection! It should not suffice for them to have given God what He requires by law, but they should add voluntary acts of a pure, generous love and liberality. Since God in pure, disinterested love confers so much good upon me, shall I fear to be doing too much by my constant endeavor to please Him by voluntary acts of virtue? But, alas, how seldom have I acted thus! How often have I done merely what was obligatory, thus exposing myself to the danger of losing many graces and stemming the flow of God's gifts by my lack of generosity!

At the age of twelve, as the gospel narrates, Jesus accompanied His parents on their pilgrimage to Jerusalem. This journey was certainly not binding on the Son of God, nor did the honor of His heavenly Father require it. Jesus, however, willed to impress upon us, by His holy example, the importance of the exact observance of the exterior practices of religion. To teach us that we, likewise, must be ready for any sacrifice when the honor of God or participation in divine worship is concerned, Jesus undertakes a fatiguing journey and willingly endures many privations during his stay in Jerusalem. What a shame for souls consecrated to God, if on similar occasions they should refuse to bear the least discomfiture or suffer the slightest inconvenience!

Do I give proofs of a magnanimous love, or do I shirk the sacrifices connected with the zealous practice of virtue?

SECOND POINT

THE HOLY FAMILY IN THE TEMPLE

In spirit, let us accompany Jesus, Mary and Joseph into the Temple. With what humility, devotion and reverence do they ascend the steps of the Temple! Now kneeling, now standing, with eyes raised to heaven, they perform their sacred duty. Let us, however, study their interior dispositions and seek to realize the ardent devotion with which they praise God, thank Him for His benefits and entreat for the people of Israel and all mankind, the plenitude of divine blessings while the many sacrifices of propitiation and expiation are being offered to God. Like the fragrance of incense, their prayers and the oblation of their pure hearts, infinitely more precious than all the other sacrifices offered in the Temple, ascended to the throne of the Most High! What a glorious Exemplar have we in this mystery, teaching us at once the outward demeanor that we should observe in the house of God, and the sentiments that should animate our hearts, especially during the holy Sacrifice of the Mass! Of what negligence have I, perhaps, been guilty? In the religious state God invites me so frequently to visit Him in His holy Temple. Often I dwell under one roof with my Sacramental God. How grateful ought I to be for such an extraordinary grace, how highly esteem and faithfully utilize it! But is it not as though the ease with which I can acquire these heavenly treasures increases my neglect?

The Holy Family would not return to Nazareth before the seven days of the Pasch had expired. They could have departed earlier without violating their duty, but it was their aim to fulfill the law in the minutest detail.

Do we manifest a similar zeal for all that appertains to divine worship? Do we not offer God a mutilated oblation, by depriving Him of a portion of the time to which He has a just claim? How culpable would religious be were they to curtail their devotional exercises or discharge the duties of their vocation superficially so as to gain time for idle conversation or other non-essentials.

Affections: O Holy Family, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, glorious models of devotion and fervor in the service of God! In imitation of your example we will endeavor to appear in the house of God imbued with the sentiments of a lively faith, profound reverence and tender devotion. Let us share your fiery ardor, that we may immolate all our inclinations, all earthly affections to the service and the honor of God, and thus adore our heavenly Father in spirit and in truth. O ye holy angels, wrapt in ecstasy when contemplating the Holy Family in prayer, call to our minds this sublime example when in your holy company we are privileged to appear in the presence of our God in His holy Temple.

Resolution: We will endeavor to perform our devotional exercises with greater fervor in the future.

Spiritual Bouquet: "And his parents went every year to Jerusalem at the solemn day of the Pasch."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 19TH

THE CHILD JESUS REMAINS IN THE TEMPLE

"And having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem; and His parents knew it not, and thinking that He was in the company

they came a day's journey and sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance" (Luke 2, 43-44).

First Prelude: Behold Mary and Joseph, seeking the Divine Child amid great sorrow.

Second Prelude: Grant me, O Jesus, a right understanding of this mystery, that I may derive great benefit from its contemplation.

First Point

JESUS REMAINS IN JERUSALEM WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS PARENTS

Jesus foresaw that His remaining in Jerusalem without the knowledge of His holy Mother and holy foster-father should plunge them into the greatest anxiety and sorrow. The parents from whom Jesus severed Himself could not have been more worthy of His love than they were; nor could they have been more tenderly loved by Him. Without intimating His intention, without telling them how long they should be deprived of His presence, He separated Himself from His beloved parents. It was a source of unspeakable pain to His Sacred Heart, thus to grieve them, but He heeded not the pain to teach those called to follow Him in the religious state, a lesson of detachment from even the most legitimate natural affections, when the Will and the honor of God so demand it. He would teach His disciples to die wholly to tendencies grounded in flesh and blood, to transform the natural affection for parents, relatives and friends into a supernatural love, such as we bestow upon God, a love that springs from grace and is actuated by faith. Thus, natural affection is not destroyed, but merely perfected, and, as it were, divinized and rendered meritorious of an everlasting reward.

Alas, how many who have begun to walk the path of perfection, have become victims of a most deplorable delusion by refusing to accept, or rather, to practice this doctrine. Should we not be willing to sacrifice not only inordinate love for relatives and friends, but also all other natural affections which would captivate our heart and blight the love of God? The Lord requests of His spouses an undivided heart! He urges us to detach our hearts from any too natural affections, wholly unworthy of a soul called to greater things, to perfection. Divine graces and blessings will flow to us abundantly if we are generous in making the sacrifices God requires of us. On the contrary, our reserve and opposition to His counsels may frustrate God's merciful designs in our regard, and draw down upon ourselves the divine vengeance.

Second Point

MARY AND JOSEPH SEEK JESUS

In the throng of returning pilgrims, Mary and Joseph lost sight of the Divine Child. They believed, however, that the Child was in the company of friends and expected to meet Him in the evening at the first halting place. Not finding Him, and unable to gain information concerning His whereabouts, their anxiety and sorrow baffled description. What forebodings may have arisen in their hearts! Early at daybreak, they hurried back to Jerusalem, to seek the beloved Child, but for three days they had to suffer the pangs of bitter separation. What a bitter suspense for Mary and Joseph, who loved Jesus with all the ardor of their souls, yea, loved Him a thousand times more than their own life! O wonderful guidance of divine wisdom and love! Through this three days' bitter

trial, Mary and Joseph were perfected in love of God and prepared for newer and greater gifts of divine grace.

God deals likewise with souls whom He has called to perfection. He conceals Himself, as it were, to teach them that His presence and sensible delights in prayer are gifts to which they have no claim. He would teach them, further, to test their love and devotion in the fires of desolation and to serve God for Himself, alone, and not for the sake of His gifts. Often, however, we forfeit the sweetness of the divine presence through our fault. We are often deprived of the sensible effects of divine grace by our own neglect, by sloth and tepidity in prayer, by lack of good intention, sluggishness in the combat of temptations till we finally relapse into utter dryness and spiritual aridity. If in this self-imposed state of aridity and disconsolation we fail to seek Jesus with a humble and contrite heart, fervently and perseveringly, then our love is but slight, and we need not wonder to feel His chastening hand heavy upon us for our tepidity and infidelity. O Mary, O Joseph, teach me to seek Jesus as ye sought Him, that should I ever be so unhappy as to lose Him, I may deserve the happiness of finding Him again in a more intimate union.

Which faults most frequently deprive me of interior enlightenment and hinder the effects of divine grace in prayer?

Affections: Mary and Joseph lost Thee, O my Jesus, without any fault of theirs. Dare I wonder if, occasionally, Thou withdrawest Thy palpable presence and the genial light of Thy grace from me, a poor sinner? Though I have not anew offended Thee grievously, nevertheless, I displease Thee frequently through my utter neglect in Thy service. I repent of this fault with all my heart, and

resolve to fulfill my duties with greater humility, solicitude, and love. Let me find Thee, dear Lord, when I seek Thee sorrowing, and grant me the grace to derive growth in virtue and an increase of fervor and love from the trials that Thou sendest for my sanctification.

Resolution: I will conquer that fault, especially, which is most opposed to my spiritual progress.

Spiritual Bouquet: "You shall find Me, if you seek Me with all your heart."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 20TH

THE FINDING OF THE CHILD JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

"And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his wisdom and his answers" (Luke 2, 46-47).

First Prelude: Imagine yourself in the porch of the Temple, where Jesus sits in the midst of the doctors.

Second Prelude: Teach me, O Jesus, to taste Thy Divine presence in my inmost soul, and make me submissive to all whom Thou hast commanded me to hear.

First Point

MARY AND JOSEPH FIND JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

Having sought their beloved Child in vain among relatives and acquaintances, Mary and Joseph returned to Jerusalem where they found Him in the Temple. Would we find Jesus, let us seek Him not in the tumult

and turmoil of the world, not in idle conversations and distractions, not in the company of the worldly minded, or among lukewarm religious, but rather in the house of God, in prayer, in the place of devotion where holy obedience and duty calls us. Let us seek Him in the Sacrament of His Love, where He constantly dwells with us, and invites us lovingly, saying: "Come to me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. 11, 28). How happy are religious who dwell under one roof with Jesus, but a few steps from the Beloved of their soul, and find consolation, light, peace, strength and courage with Him.

The saints sought and found Jesus in another temple, where they were always most intimately united with Him. This is the temple of the heart, of which St. Paul says: "Know you not, that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (I Cor. 3, 16). Here in the secret sanctuary of our heart, He wills to dwell, to be loved and adored. He Himself tells us: "I will dwell in them, and walk among them; and I will be their God" (II Cor. 6, 16). This was the quiet cell which St. Catherine of Siena made in her heart. There she enjoyed uninterrupted union with God, conversing with Him lovingly. St. Teresa, likewise, sought and found the Lord in the temple of her heart, and she encourages us to follow her example, when she says: "I believe that all who have in such manner concealed themselves in the miniature heaven of their souls, where their Creator dwells, have chosen an excellent way and will find themselves in a very short time far advanced in perfection."

How deplorable is it not, to find even among religious so many who ignore this wholesome practice! They neglect to curb their senses and inclinations, and then com-

plain of dryness in prayer, and of the increasing number of their faults.

Second Point

JESUS AMONG THE DOCTORS OF THE LAW

It was customary in Jerusalem for the doctors of the law to assemble in the portico of the Temple on certain days, and from elevated seats to address the assembled populace. Jesus was among the crowds. What joy for Mary and Joseph to see their beloved Son, Whose loss had grieved them most keenly! How they marveled to hear Him put questions to the doctors, and answer those asked of Him, expound the Scriptures, and advance His arguments so modestly and, withal, so concisely that the whole assembly was enrapt! What wonderful example our Divine Saviour sets us here! He who possesses the plenitude of heavenly Wisdom, plays the rôle of pupil. He addresses the scribes with that deference and respect due them by virtue of their rank and age, and if He is asked a question, He answers with great deliberation and humility.

Let us learn from our Divine Lord in this instance, how to act toward our God-given teachers. Do we listen to the word of God in sermons and instructions, always with a docile, eager, heart? Is our attitude toward those who teach us, one of reverence and respect? In our intercourse with others do we try to act humbly, patiently, and with moderation, and thus guard against indiscreet zeal, and forwardness? We read in the gospel that all who heard the Divine Child marveled at His Wisdom, and His replies—still we read nothing as to the effects of this

appearance of Jesus on the scribes. It was surely in the designs of Jesus to provoke reflection in the doctors, and to urge them on to further investigations in the Sacred Scriptures, and thus to convince them that the Messiah had appeared. How often, alas, are even the holiest impressions soon effaced in the turmoil of daily life! We remain inactive and simply marvel at opportunities without utilizing them to our spiritual advantage. Virtue has a certain fascination for us, but we lack the necessary courage and determination to practice it.

Affections: Thou dost merit, my beloved Jesus, that I seek Thee with all my heart, and with the most ardent desire. I will seek Thee in the sanctuary of the Temple, in the Sacrament of Love, where Thou awaitest me to pour out upon me the plenitude of blessing and grace. I will seek Thee incessantly in the depths of my soul, sanctified by grace, which Thou hast chosen for Thy dwelling. Let me commune with Thee, my Jesus, in holy recollection, submit to Thy inspirations, co-operate with Thy grace, and not marvel fruitlessly at Thy Wisdom. Give me the simplicity and the docility of a humble disciple toward those whom Thou hast charged with the direction of my soul. I will accept their teachings with reverence and submission, and thereby advance in the virtues of my state of life.

Resolution: I will frequently adore my Jesus in the innermost recesses of my soul.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Speak Lord, Thy servant heareth."

Prayer: Jesus, my Lord, my King . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 21ST

MARY'S QUESTION AND THE ANSWER OF JESUS

"And His mother said to Him: Son, why hast Thou done so to us? behold Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And He said to them: How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know, that I must be about my father's business?" (Luke 2, 48-49).

First Prelude: Picture Mary and Joseph in the act of finding Jesus in the Temple.

Second Prelude: Teach me, O Jesus, how to detach my heart from all earthly things, in order to fulfill the duties of my holy calling more perfectly.

First Point

MARY'S QUESTION

Mary said to Jesus: "Son, why hast Thou done so to us?" These words were no reproof on the part of Mary, much less a reproach for His actions. They were but a respectful complaint, coming from the loving heart of a Mother—a complaint voicing in trustful, loving simplicity Mary's pain at the loss of such a Son. Mary felt herself constrained to reveal to her Son the magnitude of her grief that He might know how she loved Him. She then modestly seeks to fathom the reason why Jesus withdrew from them, that she might the better know the Will of God, and be in a position to fulfill it. If God visits us with sufferings, we are permitted to manifest our grief and voice our complaints to the Lord, but let us do it confidently and humbly, not yielding to impatience, diffidence and despondence. If in all our trials we were con-

tent to pour out our grief solely at the feet of Jesus, we should find with Him that consolation which the world cannot give.

Mary, further, observes: "Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." She could well speak thus for her loving heart was, indeed, saturated with the bitterest pain, and even now it was being pierced by the sword of sorrow, as Simeon had prophesied. Mary knows from experience what it means to be deprived of the presence of Jesus. She is, therefore, filled with the tenderest compassion with souls who are immersed, as it were, in an ocean of interior sufferings, by which the Lord would cleanse them from the rust of sin or prepare them for the reception of new and greater graces.

Let us, therefore, not grow disheartened if God seems to try us, even when we have deserved sufferings in punishment for our sins. Let us turn to Mary, our powerful and benign Mother and intercessor, begging her to make known to us the reasons why the Lord deprived us of His grace and to teach us how to regain lost fervor.

Second Point

THE ANSWER OF JESUS

Having heard the loving complaint of His holy Mother, Jesus replied: "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know, that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2, 49). This is the first word we find in the gospel concerning Jesus, and it was a mysterious word, which His holy Mother and foster-father could not understand, as we expressly read in Scripture. Inexpressibly happy in the possession of their treasure, they do not seek to fathom the secret designs of Divine Wisdom, but adore

them in all humility and reverence. But Mary kept all these words in her heart, and made them the object of her devout contemplation. The Holy Ghost did not reveal to her suddenly, but only gradually, the manner of Christ's redemption of human kind.

Let us learn from Mary to accept the word of God with sentiments of self-abasement, even though we fail to comprehend some of the mysteries involved. We should rest content with the light God vouchsafes us, without seeking more, perhaps, to our spiritual detriment. We should be faithful in the discharge of the duties God asks of us, humbly adoring the designs of Providence without prying into the future, which veils them.

The answer of Jesus further comprises a great lesson, particularly for religious. "Did you not know, that I must be about My father's business?" Jesus wills to say: I must employ myself exclusively with that which concerns the honor of My Father. I am come into the world to do, not my Will, but the Will of Him, Who sent Me. Souls, likewise, who have consecrated themselves to God as religious, must say: I must be about my Father's business. If they are asked about their thoughts, they must be able to answer that their thoughts are with God, for where else could they presumably be? To think of God must be my greatest delight, to love Him, my greatest happiness. I can say with the Psalmist: "My eyes are ever towards the Lord" (Ps. 24, 15). If a soul consecrated to God is asked what she is doing she must be able to say: I am fulfilling the Will of Him Who has created me, redeemed me with His Precious Blood and in infinite mercy called me to His special service. I try to keep from all that is incompatible with the duties of my holy state, and confess with the royal prophet: "All my ways are in

thy sight" (Ps. 118, 168). Yes, I must and I will be wholly and entirely about my Father's business.

Can I speak thus at all times? Do I close my heart to all idle and distracting things?

Affections: How great is Thy zeal, my Jesus, in the service of the heavenly Father! When there is question of accomplishing His holy Will, Thou knowest no earthly consideration. Thou didst suffer Mary and Joseph whom Thou didst love so tenderly to be plunged into the profoundest grief. Give me a clear knowledge of the purpose for which Thou didst create me and call me to the religious state. Grant me grace to direct my mind, my heart, my strength and all my faculties to the service and the honor of my heavenly Father. Everything shall be consecrated to Him, in time and in eternity—I will belong to Him alone.

Resolution: Before each action, particularly before the practices of devotion, I will renew the good intention.

Spiritual Bouquet: "I must be about my Father's business."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 22ND

THE HIDDEN LIFE OF JESUS AT NAZARETH

"And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them. And His mother kept all these words in her heart" (Luke 2, 51).

First Prelude: Picture the little house at Nazareth in which the Holy Family dwells.

Second Prelude: Teach me, O my Divine Saviour, by Thy example, the excellence of an interior and hidden life, that I may seek and find my happiness in the practice of it.

First Point

JESUS TEACHES US IMPORTANT LESSONS IN HIS HIDDEN LIFE

The God-Man, the Incarnate Wisdom, the Fountainhead of knowledge, Who discourses with a heavenly eloquence, Whose charming suavity captivates mind and heart —Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, Who unites in Himself all goods of nature and of grace; Who came into this world to redeem and sanctify the entire human race; the Messiah, the Desired of all Nations—is now among men and they know it not. How easy would it be for Him to attract all, by intimating His divine dignity. But instead of this, He seems to be anxious to withdraw from public notice, by leading in their midst a life which, judged by appearances, is without worth or significance, a life which seems to be wholly unworthy of Him and His sublime mission. He lives in an insignificant town, in a workshop; earns His bread in the sweat of His brow, like the least day-laborer. Is it possible that a life fraught with such great expectations should be spent in so unassuming a manner?

Oh, the depths of the mysteries of the wisdom and the love of God! That Thou wert understood by all whom Jesus calls to imitate His hidden life! Yet, how difficult is it for this sublime doctrine of total renunciation of self, and esteem for a hidden, unknown and secluded life, to gain entrance into the hearts of men, even of those consecrated to God! Are we not tempted, when contemplating the secluded life of our Divine Saviour, to say with His relatives: "Manifest Thyself to the world" (John 7, 4), it is going to ruin, while Thou art doing nothing for its redemption! But Jesus answers us as

once He answered His Apostles: "Are you also yet without understanding" (Matt. 15, 16)? You accuse Me of idleness and yet I am fulfilling the Will of my Father. Is not this alone great and laudable? You allege that I squander time, and yet I am instructing men, especially those aspiring to perfection, in the sublime science of the saints. I teach them to love seclusion, to be unknown and despised by the world, should Divine Providence suffer such trials to come upon them.

O my Jesus, Infinite Wisdom, I thank Thee for the lesson Thou teachest me! The obscurity with which Thou dost veil Thyself is a bright light illumining my pathway. In the light of Thy holy example, I see clearly the nothingness of all earthly goods. From it, I learn to seek God alone and to desire naught save His love and esteem.

Second Point

JESUS, IN HIS HIDDEN LIFE, IS A SOURCE OF CONSOLATION FOR US

How many years did Mary and Joseph spend in deep seclusion with our Divine Saviour! Surely, He must have been their joy and consolation, continually bestowing upon them marks of His especial love. With what joy may their eyes have rested on their beloved Son! How were their hearts inflamed in conversation with Him! How instructive and edifying was His example! O blessed dwelling of Nazareth! O miniature heaven on earth! What shall I say of Thy glory? When and where has ever dwelling harbored so much earthly poverty, and such divine wealth! Should we not learn to seek our happiness, our consolation and joy in a hidden life, in retirement

from worldly distractions and intimate intercourse with Jesus? Let us esteem ourselves happy to be called to a state in which, as the Apostle says, we are dead to the world and hidden with Christ in God. Oh, the peace, the glorious liberty of a soul that realizes the advantages of such a hidden life! What wealth she can accumulate!

Mary and Joseph learned from the teachings and the example of the Divine Child, how to please God by the commonplace daily duties, more than by the most conspicuous works, which, though they excite the admiration of the world, are worthless in the sight of God. What happiness in loving God and meriting His love by conformity to His holy Will! Must not this conviction fill us with great joy? Why should we grieve over delicate health, mediocre talents, or an apparently insignificant field of labor? Everything in the life of our Blessed Saviour was ordered and regulated by the Divine Will, which circumstance constituted the superabundant merit, the intrinsic worth of His whole life. Consequently, the Will of God should ever be the sole motive of all my actions. O Mary, O Joseph, teach me the holy art of putting this truth into practice.

Affections: O Jesus, Thy hidden life teaches me what constitutes the essence of perfection. Give me grace to love such a holy life, that I may find happiness in communing with Thee. Renew in me the fervor that should accompany all my actions, even the smallest, prescribed by the Holy Rule. O Mary, O Joseph, ye fortunate witnesses of the hidden life of Christ, obtain for me the grace to imitate Him. Let me share the peace and happiness that reigned in your humble home at Nazareth.

Resolution: I will endeavor to perform my ordinary actions perfectly.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Love to be unknown and esteemed as naught, that you may have knowledge."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 23

THE OBEDIENCE OF JESUS IN HIS HIDDEN LIFE

"He was subject to them" (Luke 2, 51).

First Prelude: Represent to yourselves our Blessed Saviour at Nazareth, rendering the most perfect obedience to His parents.

Second Prelude: My Jesus, teach me by Thy example to esteem and love obedience, so that by the practice of the same I may safely attain to the perfection of my holy calling.

First Point

HOW JESUS LOVES AND PRACTICES OBEDIENCE

In the few words: "He was subject to them," the Holy Ghost wished to sum up the whole life of the Saviour until His thirtieth year in order to instill into us a high esteem for the virtue of obedience. This virtue includes, in a certain sense, every other virtue, the consummate sanctity of the God-Man, Whom we are to imitate. Let us, therefore, contemplate how the Divine Saviour, our sublime model, makes the practice of obedience His chief employment. The Eternal Word of God, the Supreme Wisdom, the Creator and Lord of all things, to Whom everything owes submission, renders obedience to His creatures, allows Himself to be guided and led like a child which is not yet capable of guiding itself. With loving cheerfulness He hastens to carry out what Mary and

Joseph commission; He even forestalls their wishes and this not only as long as He is a child, but even, still, when He has reached manhood. One easily perceives that it is His Heart which obeys and that, in whatever He does, He is motivated by love.

What was it that impelled our Divine Saviour to obey so perfectly? It was the desire to acknowledge the divine supremacy, to tender the Divine Majesty the tribute of homage, and to glorify the same by the most perfect execution of the Father's Will. Jesus obeyed His heavenly Father in the person of His parents and that, too, with the purest and most ardent love, so that all His acts of obedience were the expression of the most perfect love. This is, then, the true, supernatural obedience, the obedience of faith, which is deduced from the principle that the invisible God wills to guide men through other men, as His visible representatives. For this reason He invested them with His authority, so that it is said of them: "He that heareth you, heareth Me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me" (Luke 10, 16). To obey from this motive is great, honorable, and meritorious, for it implies absolute dependence on God in the person of our superiors.

O my Jesus, I thank Thee for the sublime example Thou hast given me by Thy humble obedience. Grant me the grace, in the practice of the holy obedience I have vowed, to be imbued with Thy sentiments.

Second Point

FRUITS OF RELIGIOUS OBEDIENCE

We have seen in our Divine Model that through the perfect obedience which Jesus practiced, His heavenly Father was most highly honored and glorified. In like

manner, religious can not honor God more worthily than by uniting their dependence on their superiors with the submission of the Divine Saviour. To glorify God means to acknowledge His unlimited authority. How could we better evidence this than by offering to Him what is dearest and most valuable to us, namely, our free will? This generous abandonment of truly obedient religious procures for them the generosity of God and disposes Him favorably to grant all their petitions. If we give to the Lord all that we have how could He refuse us anything? St. Augustine notes: "A single petition made by a submissive soul is more readily granted than ten thousand petitions made by a recalcitrant one." What progress in perfection does an obedient religious make within a short time! Self-will retreats entirely to give place to the Will of God, Who governs and directs his entire course of action, regulates his words and deeds, and thus in a certain sense divinizes his whole life.

In obedience one finds peace of soul, which is by far the most precious treasure one can possess here on earth. How delightfully consoling is the thought: I am where God wills me to be; I do what He wills I should do. He Himself has selected for me the place at which I now find myself as well as the work which has been assigned to me; and this choice He has made in consideration of His greater honor and my salvation. Provided I obey He assumes complete charge of everything and I am relieved of all responsibilities. O my God, how great is Thy goodness, which makes the path of holiness so easy for us! Truly, they who faithfully persevere in the practice of obedience, exercise constantly the purest love of God; the treasure of their merits increases uninterruptedly. Through the continued exercise of good works their pre-

destination is made more secure hour by hour, their crown becomes more brilliant, their eternity more blissful. Can one conceive a more encouraging thought?

Affections: On the day of my profession I surrendered myself to Thee, O my Jesus, and vowed solemnly to obey Thee constantly in the person of my religious superiors. Oh, how often have I failed to remember that Thou dost abhor rapine in the holocaust; how often have I taken back my own will and disposed of myself as though I still belonged to myself! How frequently have I by resistance, by vacillation, by human considerations, considerably diminished the merits of my obedience in Thine eyes. Pardon, O my Jesus, the unfaithfulness of Thy spouse. I renew gladly the sacrifice of my will and all my inclinations. I wish to model my obedience after Thine and to repeat to Thee the words of complete surrender: "Do with me what Thou willest and as Thou willest for I know that Thou lovest me."

Resolution: In all my actions I will unite myself with the obedience of Jesus.

Spiritual Bouquet: "He was subject to them."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

JANUARY 24

THE LABOR OF JESUS IN HIS HIDDEN LIFE

"He was subject to them" (Luke 2, 51).

First Prelude: Picture the little house of Nazareth, and ponder upon the manner in which our Divine Saviour labored.

Second Prelude: O Lord, let me realize from Thy example, with what zeal I shall perform my work and the sentiments whereby I may sanctify it.

First Point

JESUS LOVES AND PERFORMS LABOR

Since our Divine Saviour chose abject poverty as His earthly portion, He selected for Himself common and toilsome manual labor, befitting the poor. His divine hands, which hold heaven and earth, were employed in the hard work of a very ordinary occupation. His dwelling was small, inconvenient and void of many necessaries of life. In this indigent condition and extreme deprivation, "The child grew and waxed strong" (Luke 2, 40). For what mission was He growing up, and for what work did He wax strong? Primarily, for the hard work of a carpenter, to which, according to the Will of His heavenly Father, He was to subject Himself to His thirtieth year, to sanctify and ennoble labor, which is the groundwork of human existence.

What fruitful source of encouragement and consolation this truth constitutes for us, who were born to labor and, according to divine ordinance, "in the sweat of our face, to earn our bread"! Our Saviour worked to exhaustion, in order to earn a livelihood by a simple trade. In all truth, He could exclaim with the psalmist: "I am poor, and in labors from my youth" (Ps. 87, 16). Who can reasonably be ashamed of labor, or complain of its necessity? There are, accordingly, as we see from the example of Jesus, no menial occupations! To a soul loving God truly, every work is welcome, if she but knows that it conforms to His Will. Only the spirit of the world, which seeks honor and esteem, discriminates between honorable and dishonorable work. How foolish would religious be, if, infected by this spirit, they sought offices of preferment! Could they still lay claim to the title,

spouse of the poor carpenter's Son of Nazareth, Who was engaged in the commonest and most inconspicuous work? Divine Saviour, who can gauge the love and condescension which impelled Thee to instill into our hearts, by the force of Thy adorable example, love for this penance which God has imposed upon us! I will perform all my works, however strenuous, in the spirit of expiation, and in intimate union with Thy sentiments.

Do I endeavor to utilize every moment of my time according to the prescription of the Holy Rule, and during work, often direct my thoughts to the example which my Divine Saviour gave me in Nazareth?

Second Point

HOW WE MUST SANCTIFY OUR WORK, ACCORDING TO THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

The mode of life of the generality of men, especially religious, closely resembles the life of our Divine Saviour in the house of Nazareth. They devote the greater part of the day to household duties, to earning a livelihood in various avocations, and lead a life hidden from the world. Let us learn from our Divine Model, how to sanctify this life, to render it of surpassing value and merit in the sight of God.

Although Jesus was employed in exterior duties, He maintained constant union in prayer with His heavenly Father; His mind's eye was always focused on His Father's pleasure. All hardships of labor and changing conditions attendant upon it, were incitements to praise and glorify His Father in heaven. He offered Himself incessantly in sacrifice; He prayed unremittingly for us poor sinners; His whole longing was directed to the glori-

fication of the name of Him Who sent Him. From His sublime sentiments flowed the priceless value and infinite merits of His deeds. Not a single action of the Son of God was without merit, as is the case so often with men. O my Saviour, in earthly work, Thou didst descend to the level of men, but in the manner of performing it, Thou didst immeasurably surpass them. All Thy works, even the most insignificant were holy, admirable and of priceless worth. What defects do I discover in my works, O my Saviour, when I compare them with Thine! If I subtract from my supposedly good works, purely natural motives, all that is done through routine or inclination, all that has an ignoble alloy, what will remain? Alas, how much merit have I lost, since I made so slight endeavor to purify my intentions, and to enter into Thy motives?

Affections: How trifling, O Jesus, according to worldly standards, was the labor of Thy youth in the little workshop at Nazareth! How great was it, however, in the sight of the heavenly Father, and to the eyes of faith of all who ponder upon Thy unobtrusive activity! Deeply touched by contemplation of the hard labor which Thou, O Jesus, as a carpenter didst perform in the sweat of Thy face, my will, urged by Thy example, must make the resolution to imitate Thee, and joyfully to bear the burden and heat of the day. Teach me, O Lord, to be great in the eyes of Thy heavenly Father by the purity and sublimity of my intentions; that I may achieve the aim towards which my works should tend.

Resolution: In all my actions, I will unite myself with my Divine Model.

Spiritual Bouquet: "He did all things well."

Praver: "O Jesus, living in Mary.

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 25TH

FEAST OF THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?" (Acts 9, 6).

First Prelude: Represent to yourself Saul on the way to Damascus, flooded with heavenly light, falling to the ground and exclaiming: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?"

Second Prelude: O Divine Saviour, impart to me the grace to accomplish Thy Will with the readiness of St. Paul and to follow Thee with fervor on the path of perfection.

First Point

THE READINESS WITH WHICH ST. PAUL FOLLOWED THE INSPIRATIONS OF GRACE

We read in the Acts of the Apostles how Saul, completely blinded by prejudices against the religion of Christ, and burning with a false zeal, not only persecuted the Christians in Jerusalem, but, commissioned by the high-priest and the sanhedrim, started out for Damascus there in like manner to drag the Christians out of their houses, and having loaded them with chains to bring them bound to Jerusalem, that they might serve as public examples to the terror of others. But Jesus, seeing his good though perverted will, awaited him on the road, to show him the right way, and in infinite patience and mercy, to change him in the very heat of his fury into a vessel of election, to carry His name to the Gentiles. With divine power Christ, therefore, cast Saul to the ground, but spoke to him with tenderest mercy and mildness. The exterior light that blinded him is only a figure of the light that

enlightened him interiorly, and to which Saul at once willingly opened heart and mind and devoted himself wholly to God. He was conscious that a supernatural power had cast him to the ground, that the Lord was nigh, and, struck with amazement, he cried out: "Who art Thou, Lord?"

Hardly had he heard the words: "I am Jesus of Nazareth, Whom thou persecutest" (Acts 9, 6), when his resistance was broken, his heart was conquered and faith in the Divinity of Christ penetrated him with invincible conviction. His eyes were closed to the light of the sun that his spiritual eye might see the more clearly and receive more perfectly the rays of the divine Sun of grace, Christ, Jesus. In this light he recognized Jesus to be really the Messiah promised to the nations, in Whom all prophecies were fulfilled. In humble faith he now cried out: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?" "Lord," he seemed to say, "Thou it is whom I have blasphemed and persecuted? And yet Thou wilt pardon me? This, therefore, is Thy revenge of Thy bloody persecutor? What wilt Thou have me do and suffer? Henceforth I will only what Thou wilt." O brief, and yet significant, living and effective word! In a single moment it made out of a sinner a great saint, through absolute surrender to the Divine Will, which act constitutes the highest and greatest sacrifice man can offer to God. May this word ever be in our hearts and on our lips. In all our actions and omissions, in moments of doubt and combat, we will often say: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?" If the Will of God is the guiding star of our life, we shall not lose our way, but shall reach our eternal destination by the shortest and securest path.

Second Point

ST. PAUL, IN HIS CONVERSION, OUR MODEL IN STRIVING AFTER PERFECTION

The Acts of the Apostles state, when at the command of the Lord Saul arose from the ground, he found that he was blind and was led by his companions into Damascus, to await the Lord's bidding. In Damascus he prepared himself, however, by fasting and incessant prayer, to learn and execute the Will of God. If we wish to advance on the way of perfection, we, too, should be blind, as it were, for the things of this world, its honors, its pleasures, and employ them only inasmuch as is absolutely necessary for the faithful discharge of our duties. Furthermore, like Saul, we must submit to the guidance of our superiors, by rendering them perfect obedience, as well as to our spiritual director, whom we should obey with implicit trust in all that pertains to our salvation.

At Damascus, Saul awaited further manifestations of the Divine Will. We must, likewise, patiently bide the time of the Lord, even though He should delay in removing from us interior sufferings or trials, since we may be fully confident that in due time God will come to our aid. In particular, we must not neglect to restrain our inordinate inclinations, to curb our senses and by interior recollection to be constantly united with God. Then for us, too, the time shall come when, like St. Paul, we shall be found worthy to labor successfully for the salvation of souls. Hardly had the regenerating waters of baptism touched his head, when his heart was inflamed with that ardor and zeal for souls, which induced him to "Become all in all, to bring all to Christ" (Cor. 9, 22); when he was aglow with the love that urged him to labor with all his

strength to the last moment of his life, to spread the knowledge and love of Jesus.

O great Apostle of the Gentiles, obtain for me grace to grow daily in the knowledge and love of Jesus, that my zeal for souls may increase and my labors may merit the divine blessing.

Affections: O Divine Heart of Jesus, Thou hast so magnanimously revealed Thy wonderful mildness and goodness in the conversion of Thy illustrious Apostle—I bless and praise Thee for it. With the whole Catholic Church I thank Thee today for having bestowed upon him, in such profusion, the rich treasures of Thy mercy, and having made of him an elect instrument of Thy grace. Oh, impart also to my heart a spark of the fire of love that consumed St. Paul, and constrained him to become all to all, to gain all to Thee. Let me esteem all sufferings and sacrifices, yea, even death itself, as naught, when there is question of saving souls and thus of glorifying Thee.

Resolution: We will follow every inspiration of grace with utmost fidelity and immolation of self.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?"

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR JANUARY 26

THE DEPARTURE FROM NAZARETH

"And His mother kept all these words in her heart" (Luke 2, 51).

First Prelude: Picture the little house in Nazareth and our Blessed Lord as He takes leave of His holy Mother.

Second Prelude: O sweetest Jesus, give me the grace, in imitation of Thee and Thy Blessed Mother, cheerfully to offer Thee any sacrifice which Thou mayest demand of me.

First Point

MARY ANTICIPATED THE SEPARATION FROM HER DIVINE SON AND PREPARED HERSELF FOR IT

At last the time for Jesus to leave His humble home in Nazareth was drawing near. Mary knew full well that this separation was to come. The thought of it had been like a shadow which from time to time darkened for her the joy of common life. Nevertheless, Mary did not permit herself to be depressed by this sorrow. She did not permit the sufferings of the future to affect her in the present. In like manner, ought we refrain from casting anxious and searching glances into the future and accept every day with its attendant labors and trials, its joys and sorrows from the hand of God, faithfully co-operating with the grace given us, remembering the words: "Be not therefore solicitous for tomorrow; sufficient for the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6, 34). Mary knew that the time of separation was not far distant. The words which Jesus had spoken when she found Him in the Temple, still echoed in her heart: ". . . Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2, 49). She had kept these words in her heart, and had understood that, at a time not too distant, Jesus would enter upon his mission, for the accomplishment of which He had come upon earth.

Life in the company of her Divine Son afforded Mary the delights of heaven, and still she longed with a holy desire for the greatly feared day; for in her disinterested

love she wished for the coming of the hour in which her Divine Son would begin His public life, His labor of love and mercy among men. Mary knew that she had been chosen by God to share in the great work of redemption, and willingly she prepared herself for the consummation of the sacrifice, although the pain of separation was to wound her heart deeply. Let us learn from our Blessed Mother to practice disinterested love and self-sacrifice for the welfare of others. We religious are called to alleviate the sufferings of our fellowmen, and to offer ourselves for their temporal and eternal well-being. Let us, therefore, like Mary, not look upon ourselves but rivet our gaze upon Jesus, Who has gone before us on the way of complete self-surrender, and cheerfully and bravely unite our sacrifice with that of His Blessed Mother for the salvation of those entrusted to us.

Second Point

JESUS LEAVES HIS BLESSED MOTHER

Finally, the day on which Jesus wished to depart from Nazareth arrived. It certainly was no small sacrifice for Him to leave this beloved little home, where He had spent so many a year with Mary and Joseph. With the remembrance of the past was coupled the thought of the bitter sorrow His separation would cause His Blessed Mother. Jesus loved His holy Mother more than ever son loved his mother, and He fully realized how painful His departure would be to her pure heart. It is always hard for a mother to part with her only son, even though bright prospects of wealth, honor, and fame loom quite high. How much greater, however, must not her anguish have been in the knowledge that sorrow and pain, perse-

cution and ill-treatment of every kind, imprisonment, torture, and an ignominious death awaited him! All this, as Mary well knew, was in store for her well-beloved Son. How unspeakable, therefore, must have been her sorrow as she bade Him farewell!

O Mary, Mother of Sorrows, who hast so deeply felt what it means to have a heart rent with anguish, assist us when we are permitted to experience the pangs caused by the sacrifice of a separation which God demands of us. Yes, let us be mindful of Mary's bitter separation when we must part with an office which is so congenial to us in every respect, from a house in whose affairs and interests we have become incorporated, as it were, from superiors and fellow-religious with whom we were one heart and one soul. Let us unite ourselves, then, with the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and joyfully and courageously go whither God calls us through the voice of our superiors.

Affections: O sweetest Jesus, Thou Who for our salvation didst so willingly take upon Thyself every sorrow, even that of separation from Thy Blessed Mother, look pitifully upon the weaknesses of our hearts, which, although they are entirely consecrated to Thee, still attach themselves so easily to what is earthly. Free our hearts with all their inclinations from everything which is not Thyself, and give us the grace, gladly and willingly to offer Thee any sacrifice which is conducive to Thy greater honor and glory and the salvation of our fellow-men. And Thou, O Mother of Sorrows, who for us poor children of men didst so willingly bear the pain of separation from thy beloved Son, implore for us the grace to suffer with love, and like thee to share in the sufferings of thy Divine Son.

Resolution: I will patiently bear all sufferings of this day in union with Jesus and Mary.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Great as the sea is her sorrow."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

. See Intercalary Month, Volume II, Page 726

MEDITATION FOR SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

PARABLE OF THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard" (Matt. 20, 1).

First Prelude: Hear Jesus relating this parable to His disciples.

Second Prelude: Pray for the grace to be a true laborer in the Lord's vineyard, that you may merit a great heavenly recompense.

First Point

NECESSITY OF SERVING GOD

God is our supreme, sole Master; we are His property. Therefore, we are obliged to think, to speak, and to live for Him alone. By fulfilling this sacred obligation, we pay homage to Him as our Lord and God. This service, however, redounds to our own advantage, since to glorify God and to work at our perfection are one and the same—the one is impossible without the other. In today's gospel narrative our Saviour likens the service of God, the sanctification of self, to the strenuous labor in a vineyard. The stony soil of the vineyard must be tilled, the vines must be pruned and trimmed that they may bring forth fruit. We must accomplish this hard

and laborious task in ourselves by mortification of our inclinations, by combat of our ill-regulated desires, by extirpation of our faults and by the implanting of virtues. No one is exempt from the duty of sanctifying self, no one may be idle, but every one must work according to his ability. Neither riches nor poverty, neither health nor infirmity, nor yet age, can exempt us from this duty. If God demands our service He, in turn, will serve us, since we can do nothing without the assistance of His grace. In His merciful love, He will support us in this long and tedious task. What does He not do for them that serve Him with constant fidelity? He abides in their hearts and imparts to them abundant graces and consolations. He grants them true peace and inexpressible happiness even here below.

How unhappy, on the contrary, are they who resist the impulse of grace, serve God with reserve, and spend hours and days in spiritual idleness, waiting in the world's mart without thought of the honor of God and their own salvation. He who does not labor incessantly for God is a victim of a most baneful inactivity. Every moment which we do not employ for God is an infringement on His rights.

Shall I not one day be deserving of the reproach that I have idled away the greater portion of my life? Oh, how many would serve God with far greater fidelity than I, if they had the means of grace which the good God affords me! How often, even in religion, have I preferred self-will to the loving exhortations of the Lord! Can I still resist the grace of God, which urges me so powerfully to be solicitous in the all-important affair of my salvation.

Second Point

THE RECOMPENSE OF THE LABOR

How welcome is evening to the patient toiler, who, in the sweat of his brow, has borne the burden and heat of the day! How joyously he awaits the well-earned recompense at the hands of his master! Will not the evening of life be infinitely rich in blessings for pious religious who have labored faithfully in the Master's vineyard! This evening will afford abundant compensation for the many sacrifices they have made in the daily discharge of their duties. Oh, my soul, be mindful of this consoling truth when the sufferings of life weigh heavily upon, and well-nigh crush you. Likewise, bear in mind that in meting out the recompense, God shall consider neither age nor the number of days spent in His service, but rather the love and fervor with which you have served Him. It will avail us little to have spent many years in religion, if we have not acquired facility in the practice of mortification, of obedience, of humility, of pure intention.

Have you, perhaps, cause to blush for shame and to consider yourself the least among your companions? What a powerful incentive to virtue in the words of the Saviour: "The last shall be the first and the first, the last!" If the grace of God has called you to His vineyard in early youth, be on your guard lest you grow negligent and suffer those that entered "last" to outstrip you in zeal. However, even the "last" should not be disheartened, mindful that by redoubled effort they may still merit the compensation of the first.

Has my fervor always been commensurate with the graces imparted to me so generously? Would it not be

presumption, were I to esteem myself superior to others, who may have had the misfortune to fall? By humility and zeal, they may easily surpass me, who am so negligent in the affair of my salvation. Should I not strive from this day forward to be more zealous in the service of God that I may not be among the last in heaven?

Affections: O my God, in Thy infinite goodness and mercy Thou hast called me to labor in Thy vineyard, to work out my salvation, to strive for perfection! How much of the precious time allotted to me have I squandered in idleness and neglect! Henceforward, I will labor faithfully and perseveringly, with Thy grace, to the evening of my life, in order to regain lost time. To incite my fervor, and to render myself deserving of a high degree of reward in heaven, I will, in all humility, consider myself as one of the last in Thy service. Grant me, O Jesus, the spirit of immolation characteristic of Thy true followers, that, performing all my actions in the spirit of love, I may attain the degree of perfection to which Thy infinite mercy has called me.

Resolution: I will be zealous in the practice of that virtue of which I am most in need.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Why stand ye here all day idle? Go ye also into my vineyard."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR MONDAY

CHRIST'S DISCOURSE AT THE LAST SUPPER

"A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 13, 34).

First Prelude: In spirit, enter the hall of the Last

Supper, behold our Divine Saviour in the midst of His disciples, and, with profoundest reverence, hear His adorable words.

Second Prelude: O Divine Heart of Jesus, impart Thy loving sentiments to my heart, that I may perfectly fulfill Thy new commandment.

First Point

THE NEW COMMANDMENT

Though our Lord is the source of all the commandments of the New Law, He designates the command of love, especially as "His commandment," to indicate His pleasure in its observance. He calls it a new commandment because love was unknown in the Old Testament. Men loved one another from natural motives—the Jews because they were children of a common father, Abraham, and disciples of Moses. Jesus desired to teach them another kind of love by setting Himself up as their model. "Love one another" He exhorts us, "as I have loved you." And how has He loved us? He has loved us when we least deserved His love, yes, He has loved us when we offended Him, and were His enemies—when we fled from Him and remained at a distance. He manifested His love for us by the most tender words, calling us His brethren, His friends, His beloved.

Jesus loved us not alone in words, but a thousand times more in deed, by suffering and immolating Himself for us. "He hath purchased us with His Blood"—made us co-heirs of His kingdom. This should likewise be the extent of our love of our neighbor. We must make an effort, at least, to penetrate deeply into the loving design that prompted our Divine Saviour to issue this command.

He exhorts all to manifest love for one another as He has loved us, and from the same supernatural motives. Even when our neighbors seem not in the least deserving of our love, or requite it with ingratitude, we should love them sincerely to the extent of immolating our own lives, should love demand it. This is the new commandment, bequeathed by the parting Master to His beloved disciples. He gives it to them when in the act of achieving the greatest wonders of His love—the institution of the Blessed Eucharist and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

How happy should I be to find occasion in my holy calling for fulfilling this new commandment perfectly! Is it really my aim, after the example of Jesus, to be a victim of immolation for His suffering members, and do I cheerfully render them the lowliest services?

Second Point

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISCIPLES OF OUR LORD

Jesus had indeed given His disciples a "new commandment," for, when the first Christians began to practice it, the pagan world in astonishment cried out: "See how the Christians love one another!" According to the Acts of the Apostles, they were "one heart and one soul." They not only had earthly goods in common, but were ready to sacrifice all, even life itself, to afford mutual consolation and encouragement and to confirm one another in the faith. Oh, how far have most people deviated from the sentiments of the early Christians! How rarely do we find genuine, unselfish, self-immolating, persevering love! Thanks to God, Holy Mother Church still numbers among her children many true disciples of Christ, who, like the first Christians, distinguish themselves by their magnani-

mous charity. Thousands devote themselves to the education of youth, to missionary labors, to the corporal and spiritual wants of the neighbor, renouncing all prospects of honor, wealth, and the pleasures of life to immolate themselves in the exercise of heroic charity.

In the Catholic Church, alone, is the spirit of the discipleship of Christ fostered and cherished, because she, alone, possesses the living source of love—the adorable Sacrament of the Altar, whence the souls draw new courage and strength for self-immolation. When ingratitude and faithlessness of creatures are their portion, they look upon their Divine Model, who instructs them in the Holy Eucharist that the disciple is not above the Master. Strengthened by His grace, they gladly forfeit claim to any acknowledgment from creatures, with a view to the reward that is theirs as a compensation for their love. So must our love for God be the sole motive of our love for our neighbor. We shall never be able, however, to meet the requirements of our Holy Rule with regard to charity unless love of God is deeply rooted in our hearts.

Am I, everywhere and always, a disciple of Christ and a true religious? Do I contribute to the best of my ability that of our congregation, it may be said: "See how the members love one another?"

Affections: O my Divine Saviour, how sublime is the commandment of charity which embodies Thy last Will! How happy am I to have occasion in my holy vocation to fulfill this sweet command at every moment! Oh, inflame my soul with ardent love, that I may prove myself Thy true disciple, by faithfully discharging my duties. O Jesus, replenish us all with a disinterested, universal and magnanimous love, that we may incessantly glorify Thee and promote the salvation of souls.

Resolution: To prove my love for Jesus, I will exercise charity and mildness toward all, especially my fellow-religious.

Spiritual Bouquet: "A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 13, 34).

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR TUESDAY

CONTINUATION OF CHRIST'S DISCOURSE AT THE LAST SUPPER

"Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house there are many mansions. If not, I would have told you: because I go to prepare a place for you. And if I shall go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself; that where I am you also may be" (John 14, 1-3).

First Prelude: Enter the Supper Hall reverently, and listen to the words of consolation that Christ addresses to His disciples.

Second Prelude: O my Divine Saviour, let me recognize that true consolation and peace can be found only in the principles of a firm and living faith.

First Point

CHRIST BASES HIS CONSOLATION ON THE PRINCIPLES OF FAITH

Jesus had told His disciples that He would leave them, and they were sad. To re-animate their courage, and to banish all disquietude, Jesus bade them bear in mind the

principles of faith, saying: "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God; believe also, in Me." And, in truth, is not faith in God and in Jesus Christ, a firm support in all the vicissitudes of life, against the onslaughts of the Evil One, in trial and temptation? What consolation in the thought of Divine Providence guiding and ordering all things, never suffering us to be tempted beyond our strength! God's paternal love will direct all things to a happy issue. We have a Redeemer Who Himself has tasted the bitterness of sufferings, Whose grace is our support in trials and sufferings, and Who incites us to neglect none of the opportunities for sanctification of self. Nothing happens in the world without the Will, or at least the permission of God. Every moment is an ambassador, as it were, conveying to us God's mandates. The hand of God is concealed under the veil of even the most ordinary incidents of life and the daily crosses that befall us. This loving hand bears us up and leads us safely on, provided we do not hinder the safe-guidance.

Should we not proceed courageously in all our needs, trials and even the most manifold reverses and disappointments? Should we not raise our eyes above the clouds to look unremittingly at the heavenly light of faith, which is able to illumine the darkest night? In this light all things will appear different from what is viewed with a merely natural eye. Faith is the key to the divine treasures. It directs us incessantly to God, the Fountain-head of graces, and teaches us to pray for grace. What a power faith wields over our hearts! In its light we behold the goodness of a loving Providence in everything. We look upon those who wrong us, as instruments in the hands of God to effect our sanctification. Far from being dis-

heartened, let us say with St. Teresa: "Let nothing disturb thee—Nothing affright thee; Who God possesseth, in nothing is wanting."

When a sacrifice is demanded of me, am I mindful that God asks it for my sanctification? In all reverses, do I say: "The most high, the most just, and the most amiable Will of God be done?"

Second Point

JESUS PROMISES HIS APOSTLES TO PREPARE A DWELLING PLACE FOR THEM IN HIS FATHER'S HOUSE

Jesus directs the attention of His Apostles to the heavenly mansions, to the place of eternal joy, when He says: "I go to prepare a place for you." He promises them a place in His own glory, in His Father's house, in which need and persecution shall forever cease, and sorrow and misery shall be transformed into everlasting bliss. The consolation that Jesus here imparts to His disciples applies equally to us. He knew full well what misery and ills of all sorts weigh down the human heart, and how necessary it is for us to be buoyed up by the thought of heaven, our eternal home, the house of our Father. There is still room in the eternal mansions for millions of souls who have rendered themselves worthy of the fruits of the redemption. There are various dwellings in His Father's house for every type of virtue, for every degree of merit. Every one can truly say: God in His infinite love has prepared a place for me from all eternity. He has given me countless graces and means of salvation to merit it. He has called me to the religious state to prepare for me this particular dwelling in the heavenly mansions, which surpasses countless others in glory.

Oh, what encouragement in this thought, in this hope! With St. Paul, I am constrained to cry out: "The sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8, 18). What an incentive to zeal! If my Saviour shed the last drop of His Precious Blood to secure this place for me, must I not exert all my strength to make myself worthy? The harder it is for me in this life, the greater will be my joy in heaven and the more signal the victories that with the grace of God I shall achieve.

Does the thought of heaven and the everlasting compensation afford me courage and consolation in the sufferings and trials of life? Do I occasionally yearn for my heavenly home? Do I excite and nourish this longing?

Affections: O magnanimous, benign and omnipotent Lord, what gratitude do I owe Thee! Thou hast atoned for my misdeeds, hast shed Thy Precious Blood to reopen heaven and merit for me a never-ending glory. Help me, O my Saviour, to gain heaven with Thy grace. O heavenly home, my heart yearns and languishes for thee and bewails the time of the earthly sojourn! O God, penetrate my heart profoundly with the truths of faith in Thy promises, that nothing shall be able to mar the peace of my soul.

Resolution: When a sacrifice is asked of me, I will seek encouragement in the thought of the glorious recompense our Divine Saviour holds out to me.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Let not your heart be troubled. I go to prepare a place for you."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR WEDNESDAY

CONTINUATION OF CHRIST'S DISCOURSE

"And whither I go, you know, and the way you know. Thomas said to Him: 'Lord, we know not whither Thou goest and how can we know the way?' Jesus said to him: 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No man cometh to the Father, but by Me'" (John 14, 4-6).

First Prelude: Remain in the Supper Room at the feet of Jesus, and listen with profoundest reverence, to His discourse.

Second Prelude: O my Divine Saviour, liberate me from dangerous self-deception with regard to my salvation and give me the grace to follow with fidelity on the way Thou hast walked before us.

First Point

THE DISCIPLES FAILED TO UNDERSTAND THEIR DIVINE MASTER

Jesus had often told His disciples that He should be delivered to the pagans and be crucified, and that He should rise again on the third day. Therefore, He could now say to them: "And the way, you know, and whither I go you know." How clearly the disciples showed that it is difficult to comprehend the mystery of the cross! Thomas at once answered: "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" Like the Apostles we, too, are well instructed in our duties; we know the way to heaven but also the way to perdition. We are convinced that with the grace of God we can attain perfection and secure heaven, but that, on the con-

trary, if we neglect our duties and the subjugation of our passions we shall not work out our salvation. Nevertheless, we often forget these important truths and so easily neglect penance in days of health. When corporal sufferings fall to our lot, we lose sight of the merits concealed in the cross; when pride is wounded, we ignore the necessity of humility and, in our intercourse with others, utterly disregard the obligations imposed upon us by the command of love. We often suffer ourselves to be so completely engrossed in earthly concerns as to lose sight of heavenly things.

Have we not left the world and entered religion, that we might seek what is everlasting? Our Holy Rule clearly marks the way that we should walk, tells us what to do and what to omit under various circumstances, and so long as we are obedient, we are sure of never losing sight of our eternal destination. With more right than to His Apostles, Jesus could say to us: "You know the way." Truly we can never allege ignorance as an excuse. Negligence in prayer and meditation, however, darkens the mind and envelops the understanding with a mist. We deceive ourselves with regard to our most serious duties and ignore the smaller ones altogether, thus deviating ever farther from the straight path. Oh, that such a calamity should never befall us! That we should rather cause the light of faith to shine more brilliantly in us, by persevering zeal in fervent prayer!

Do my actions not frequently prove that I do not ponder sufficiently the eternal truths relative to the necessity of humility, obedience, charity, patience, and silence?

Second Point

JESUS INSTRUCTS HIS DISCIPLE THAT HE IS THE WAY TO THE FATHER

Our Saviour came from heaven upon earth to show mankind the way to heaven by His teachings and His example. "I am the Way." This way is accessible to every one, but it is also the only way, outside of which there is naught but confusion and folly. It is, indeed, a narrow path, as Jesus Himself has said; it is fatiguing and steep, but His grace renders it sweet and agreeable. It is an honorable way—all who now triumph in heaven have walked it. The Queen of Angels and Saints walked it. The glorious hosts of Apostles, martyrs, confessors, and virgins, and millions of religious, all followed Jesus, their adorable Leader, and attained to the Father through Him. They all followed the eternal, undeceiving Truth, and enlightened by its brightness, they could not go astray. Strengthened and fortified by the Bread of Life, in the Sacrament of His Love, they cheerfully bore the hardships and privations of their thorny path, pushing ever onward to life eternal.

Jesus says also to us: "I am the Way. Follow Me." Should we not remain in His presence through holy recollection, and seek to contemplate Him diligently during the hour of meditation, so as to become imbued with His holy example and make it our rule of life? Let us often ask ourselves: How should I labor, pray, bear my cross, practice dependence, humility and poverty that I may truly imitate my Saviour? How should I, like Him, bear with the faults of my neighbor, especially my fellow religious, and the often inconsiderate demands of the children entrusted to my care? What has Jesus not done

for love of me, to set me an example for imitation? Should I hesitate to do as much for the sake of my own salvation? And if I feel that the spirit is willing, but the flesh weak, I must hasten to draw new life and energy from the Sacrament of Love. From His Eucharistic throne, Jesus overwhelms me with graces and gives me the strength and energy to pursue the way courageously, and finally to attain heaven.

Affections: O my Divine Saviour, Who hast said: "No one can come to the Father but by Me," I thank Thee that Thou hast shown me, by word and example, the way that leads to life eternal. To my confusion, I must admit that though I have been so long in Thy school of perfection, I am still not penetrated with the great mysteries of Thy love as I ought to be. Enlighten me, O Divine Saviour, Who art Truth itself, that in future I may walk in Thy light. Sanctify me, Thou Source of Life, let me daily make new progress in the knowledge of Thy love and the imitation of Thy virtues on the way Thou hast marked out for me. Yes, O my Saviour, I realize my inability to come to the Father but by Thee. I seize the hand Thou so mercifully holdest out to me; I will hold it fast, that I may be Thine in life and in death.

Resolution: I will endeavor to follow Jesus on the way of humility and self denial.

Spiritual Bouquet: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR THURSDAY

CONTINUATION OF CHRIST'S DISCOURSE

"He that hath My commandments and keepeth them; he it is that loveth Me. And he that loveth Me, shall be loved of My Father; and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him" (John 14, 21).

First Prelude: In spirit kneel at the feet of Jesus to hear His loving promises.

Second Prelude: Give me the grace, O Jesus, to love Thee with a strong, generous love, that Thy glorious promises may be fulfilled in me.

First Point

THE OBSERVANCE OF THE COMMANDMENTS IS THE SUREST PROOF OF OUR LOVE OF GOD

Religious are often victims of a deplorable delusion with respect to divine love, when they believe sanctity to consist in lengthy vocal prayers, and in the performance of various exercises of devotion. Hence, some claim to be hindered by external occupations from loving God, and others neglect their most important duties to foster union with God in prayer. They are disconsolate when deprived of sensible devotion and consider all as lost. How little have they understood the words of Jesus: "Who keepeth My commandments he it is that loveth Me!" The more we love God the more perfectly we shall fulfill His holy Will, but our love shall be commensurate with our fidelity in observing His precepts and commandments conscientiously. If we faithfully fulfill the holy Will of God, manifested through the voice of our superiors, our Holy

Rule and the inspirations of grace, we may rest assured that our love of God is genuine even though we experience no relish for prayer, and are absolutely devoid of consolation. Such aridity of soul is the touch-stone of true love,—a sure test to ascertain whether we seek God or self.

If God occasionally affords us consolations, He does so to draw us to Himself, to assist our weakness, to encourage, or, perhaps, to compensate, us for sacrifices made for Him. Jesus instructs us repeatedly on this point, especially when He says: "For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matt. 7, 2). Was not Christ's absolute conformity to the Will of His heavenly Father from the first moment of His life to His last breath on the cross, the very essence of His love for His heavenly Father? In a similar manner the saints testified their love, and today many of my fellow-religious give proof of true love of God by their prompt compliance with their Holy Rule and the injunctions of obedience.

Should I not be able to serve God with equal fervor? How many occasions have I daily to prove my love for Jesus by the practice of obedience, poverty, and self-denial! If I utilize them to my advantage I may claim to love God. Do I shrink from any sacrifice demanded of me in my holy calling?

Second Point

THE REWARD OF OUR LOVE

What glorious promises does Jesus make to those who truly love Him! What more could we desire than to be loved by God! At what expense is the love of creatures

often purchased, what hardships and difficulties are shouldered and borne cheerfully! And yet how often are these endeavors futile, and requited only with ingratitude! And even if we should succeed in gaining the favor of a creature, or the love of all mankind, what should it profit us? Under the most favorable conditions, happiness is only short-lived and may result in a great loss for eternity. God's love is unchangeable, it lasts forever; it makes us happy in time and inexpressibly happy for eternity. And how easy it is to merit this love! "If I only will to be a friend of God," says St. Augustine, "I am His friend." True desire for His love constitutes love itself.

How could Jesus fail to still our desire when, according to His words, "He came to cast fire upon the earth, and wills naught but that it be kindled" (Luke 1, 49)? "I will love Him and will manifest Myself to him" (John 14, 21). What a glorious promise of our Divine Saviour and how has He fulfilled it! By becoming Man and giving Himself to us in the Sacrament of His Love, He has entered into most active intercourse with us. This is a mystery of faith, transpiring in the souls of the just, but hidden from the eyes of the world. One day, however, it shall be revealed to all, to the confusion of those who have preferred foolish love of creatures to communion with their hidden God; to the greatest joy of the elect, who will find perfect bliss in the manifestations of the love of God for them.

Could I ever believe to be doing too much; could I find His commandments and the obligations of my holy vocation irksome or too exacting when I ponder the love of God, and in particular the love of Jesus? Must I not rather fear to render myself undeserving of intimate communion with Him, by my lack of the spirit of immolation.

Affections: Couldst Thou, O Jesus, promise us anything more glorious than Thy love? How is it possible that hearts are so ungrateful, so cold and indifferent, as not to correspond to such love! Even I, Thy spouse, have so often rendered myself undeserving of it. Oh, permit me not to languish further in this coldness, to be so foolish as to prefer earthly affections to Thy divine love. Inflame my heart ever more with Thy holy love, that I may be faithful in observing Thy commandments. Come and take possession of my soul, dispose of it according to Thy pleasure, and effect that intimate union which embodies the plenitude of all heavenly goods.

Resolution: I will rejoice in being able frequently to testify my love of Jesus by a sacrifice.

Spiritual Bouquet: "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father; and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR FRIDAY

CONTINUATION OF CHRIST'S DISCOURSE AT THE LAST SUPPER

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid" (John 14, 27).

First Prelude: In spirit enter the Cenacle and hear Jesus promising peace to His disciples.

Second Prelude: O Divine Saviour, give me great esteem of Thy peace, that I may strive to acquire it, or to preserve and increase it.

First Point

THE PEACE OF THE SAVIOUR

The peace which Christ promised the disciples and through them all the faithful is a triple peace: with God, with our neighbor, and with ourselves. Peace with God consists in the complete and all-around conformity with, and abandonment to, the holy Will of God. God has manifested His Will through the commandments, the regulations and teachings of His Holy Church, and to religious in a particular manner through the direction of their superiors. Who desires to taste of this peace must strive under all circumstances, be they agreeable or not, to conform his will to the Will of God. Nothing happens without divine dispensations; even the trivial, insignificant incidents of daily life are a part of the loving economy of God, leading us on to our destination, eternal happiness. In virtue of this resignation, we repose in the arms of Divine Providence, like a child in the arms of its mother, in deep, secure peace.

What efforts have I made to acquire peace with God? In other words, how have I conformed to the Will of God, in whatever form it accosted me? Do I see the loving hand of God's paternal Providence in the daily little happenings? Have I not frequently been dissatisfied when God's Will was manifested to me in the wishes and injunctions of my superiors?

Genuine peace with God is always accompanied by peace with one's neighbor. His peace is firmly rooted in the love and unity of hearts. Who wishes to possess it, as St. Paul tells us, must live in peace and harmony with all men as much as lies in his power. Such a one must comply faithfully with the fundamental precepts of love

and peace: Give your neighbor nothing to bear; bear patiently with his faults. Never inflict a wrong on your neighbor; grant him all that is commensurate with the duty of charity. As a religious, bound to strive for perfection, I may not rest satisfied with having thus complied, but I must be prepared even to forego a privilege cheerfully, or to relinquish a right, in order to preserve peace.

With what solicitude do I observe these regulations? Have I never disturbed peace by excessive sensitiveness, ill-humor, or by stubborn, rigid adherence to my preconceived views?

Peace with oneself consists in the testimony of a good conscience, in the subjection of the senses and the passions to reason, and reason to faith. Without God's special grace, we shall never attain to perfect peace on this earth. We shall never succeed in completely subjugating or extirpating our passions. Even the Apostle speaks of a law in his members, contrary to the law of the spirit, which holds him captive under the law of sin (Rom. 7, 23). If it was impossible even for the "Vessel of Election" (Acts 9, 15) to neutralize this law, it will surely be the more impossible for us. We must seek peace here on earth in the uninterrupted struggle with our passions. God is pleased with us if we subjugate them merely to the extent of gaining their control. "It is by resisting the passions, therefore, and not by serving them, that true peace is to be found" (Foll. Bk. 1, Ch. 6).

Second Point

EXCELLENCE OF THE SAVIOUR'S PEACE

To bring us this peace, Christ became Man. His whole lifework was, in reality, a work of peace and reconcilia-

tion. He was promised as Prince of Peace, and was such, indeed, when, as St. Paul sublimely says: "He reconciled all things unto Himself, making peace through the Blood of His Cross" (Col. 1, 20). At His birth, peace was announced to the world by the angelic hosts. In the interest of peace, He frequently evaded His enemies. At the end of His life, shortly before His passion, He promised this peace to his disciples, calling it "His peace." "Peace be with you!" was our Saviour's first greeting, when He appeared to His Apostles on the evening of the resurrection. How highly Jesus valued peace! Does not this prove sufficiently its intrinsic worth?

Without this threefold peace, the heart of man is like a sea, agitated by a violent storm. The Holy Ghost cannot rule such a heart with His grace. A heart disturbed by passions, is callous to His inspirations—a further proof of the excellence of peace and the necessity of making an effort to acquire it.

Affections: O Divine Saviour, Thou Prince of Peace, eternal thanks to Thy infinite love, for the inestimable gift of Thy divine peace. Let me ever become deeply penetrated with its value and excellence. Grant me the grace never to grow weary in striving for peace, and always gladly to apply the means necessary to secure the possession of Thy peace, so as never to lose it.

Resolution: I will endeavor to remove the hindrances that have thus far opposed the Saviour's peace in my heart.

Spiritual Bouquet: "My peace I leave you."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR SATURDAY

CONTINUATION OF CHRIST'S DISCOURSE AT THE LAST SUPPER

"I am the true vine and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He will take away; and every one that beareth fruit, He will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15, 1-2).

First Prelude: Again enter the Cenacle, and listen attentively to Christ's touching words.

Second Prelude: O my God, cleanse my soul more and more of its imperfections, that it may be worthy of intimate union with Thee, which Thou desirest so ardently.

First Point

JESUS THE TRUE VINE

Jesus calls Himself the Vine and us the branches. As the sap is transmitted from the trunk to the branches, and nourishes and fructifies them, so we, through the grace of our Blessed Saviour and intimate union with Him, receive the strength to produce fruits of salvation. Oh, glorious union of all the faithful with Christ! What superabundance of fruits of eternal life have been brought forth by the Apostles, the martyrs, all the saints and all fervent souls who fostered union with Him! All their thoughts, words, and actions, all their sufferings, were exceedingly precious in the sight of God and were treasured up for an eternal reward. Without this union we cannot bring forth fruit, can do nothing good, nothing meritorious of heaven.

Though united with Jesus through faith and sanctifying grace, we must, nevertheless, make an effort, through

recollection and frequent remembrance of the presence of God, to draw these bonds more closely. Because of lack of zeal, of defective intention and all manner of imperfections, which so easily vitiate our otherwise good actions, distracted souls bear little fruit. Recollected souls, on the contrary, are the constant recipients of new grace, because they present no obstacles to the Divine Giver. Jesus continually pours forth in their souls His enlivening, strengthening, and consoling stream of graces, thus qualifying them for the greatest sacrifices and insuring the most glorious fruits. He does this particularly in Holy Communion.

Oh, how should we strive to foster this holy union, this interior spirit, in an exalted degree, in virtue of which all our actions, even the smallest and most indifferent, acquire great worth in the sight of God. Why have we so little comprehended the value of holy recollection, practiced it so negligently and consequently, yielded so little fruit? Shall not the heavenly Vintner when He will seek fruit, find only wild grapes in our vineyard?

Second Point

THE VINES MUST BE PRUNED THAT THEY MAY YIELD ABUNDANT FRUIT

Contemplate the loving activity of the heavenly Father in souls who live in intimate union with His Son. Even in the most perfect, He finds many defects, which He would have them correct. Consequently He seeks to purify them by the chastisements of a severe but beneficent Providence, —by crosses and sufferings, persecutions, manifold reverses, even the sacrifice of one's honor and good name. Then, again, He frustrates their plans, deprives them of

divine consolation, of loved ones, who apparently are indispensable. All these means have been wisely chosen, and are calculated to detach our hearts from creatures, and to afford us ample opportunity to bring forth purer and more precious fruits of virtue. Oh, that we would contemplate the various incidents of life, the daily little crosses from this view-point! How often do we experience even in this life that love prompts God to deal thus with us?

We must be grateful to Him for everything and surrender ourselves wholly to His divine and paternal Providence, and often say with St. Augustine; "Lord, here cut, here burn, but have mercy on me in eternity." We must deem ourselves happy to be purified in this life and thus, as far as possible, to escape the purging flames of purgatory. At the same time, we must fear, by lack of devotion, by continual distraction, and insensibility to the inspirations of grace, to sever ourselves wholly from the Vine and consequently to wither away in tepidity. Let us, rather, remain closely united with Jesus through a lively faith and self-immolating love that we may yield rich fruits and thus give glory to the heavenly Father.

Do I recognize the loving hand of our heavenly Father in the painful incisions made by crosses and reverses? Do I bear them in the spirit of faith, and do I seek to further my purification and sanctification by voluntary acts of oblation and self-denial?

Affections: O my God, I offer Thee my heart that Thou mayest cut away what is unworthy of Thee and opposed to my perfection. I will endeavor to accept, in a spirit of faith, all the trials that Thy love will send me, and to surrender myself to the loving guidance of Divine Providence. Thou, O my Saviour, art the Fountainhead

of the supernatural life of Thy elect; only in union with Thee, can I bring forth fruits of virtue and sanctification. Oh, impart to me generously of the divine, life-giving sap of Thy grace. Let me remain in Thee, and effect Thou in my soul that I may give joy to Thee by my good works, and promote the honor and glory of the heavenly Father.

Resolution: I will strive to remain intimately united with Jesus by interior recollection, and will accept gratefully the sufferings He imposes upon me for my sanctification.

Spiritual Bouquet: "He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit.

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

PARABLE OF THE SOWER

"A sower went out to sow seed; and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And other some fell upon a rock and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away because it had no moisture. And other some fell upon thorns, and the thorns growing up, with it, choked it. And other some fell upon good ground, and being sprung up yielded fruit a hundred-fold" (Luke 8, 5-8).

First Prelude: In spirit join the multitudes listening to Jesus as He relates this parable.

Second Prelude: O my Jesus, give me grace to be of the number of those who not only hear Thy divine word but also comprehend it, preserve it in their heart, and yield fruit a hundredfold.

First Point

CONTEMPLATE THE SOWER AND THE SEED

Who does not recognize in the Sower our Divine Saviour, Who in infinite love descended to earth to drop into the hearts of men the inestimable seed of His heavenly doctrine, that they may yield fruit for everlasting life? Our Divine Saviour Himself designates the seed as the word of God, or the word of the kingdom of God, which is grounded in sanctifying grace, in faith, and in the practice of all virtues, and which should be developed and fructified in us through this word. What precious and rare seed is not the word of God! How ardently should we desire, and how eagerly strive, to make our hearts receptive for it!

God is always ready to aid us and offers us His graces in generous measure. He desires nothing more ardently than our salvation and perfection, and exhorts us incessantly by special divine inspirations. What gratitude do we owe Jesus for our holy vocation in which he ceases not to implant His seed into our hearts, by interior enlightenments and salutary inspirations, as well as by penetrating admonitions and good example, calculated to incline the will towards the practice of virtue. The more faithful we are, the more generously will God sow His seed into our hearts; if, however, we resist His grace and the special marks of His divine love, or manifest ingratitude toward the Divine Sower, we force Him to withdraw from us entirely.

Let us, therefore, hear the word of God in whatever form it comes to us, with reverence, faith and submission, and let us pray the Lord to help us that we may regulate our whole conduct accordingly, "That not," as we read in

the Imitation, "the word be unto judgment, if we only hear it, but fail to accomplish it, recognize but fail to love it, believe it but fail to regulate our conduct accordingly."

Second Point

HINDRANCE TO THE OPERATIONS OF DIVINE GRACE

If the seed of the divine word yields little or no fruit in us, though imparted to us so generously, the fault can lie only in the poorly-prepared soil of our heart. Our Divine Saviour points out the three main hindrances that blight its fertility. As first cause of sterility He designates the seed that fell by the wayside, namely, into a heart that, like a public thoroughfare, is open to traffic, to all manner of distractions and affections for creatures. Unobserved and with little effort the Evil Spirit will succeed in taking out of such a heart the good seed, the wholesome lessons, good inspirations, and holy resolves. How important, therefore, is it for us to foster recollection and to guard our heart diligently!

Again, some hearts are superficial. They resemble stony ground, covered with a thin layer of earth in which the seed, indeed, sprouts quickly, but withers very soon. Superficial souls manifest great zeal at the outset on hearing the word of God, but they lack perseverance. Failing to ground their virtue deeply in humility, they yield to presumption, vanity, and affection for their private judgment. They overestimate their own strength and, not reckoning sufficiently with their inherent weakness, nor relying on the grace of God, they are brought to waver by the slightest temptation or a mere word of reproach. They are vacillating and inconstant, hence their zeal is short-lived. The thorns which choked the seed are the

excessive care for temporalities, natural affections, vain desires and apprehensions. If these vitiate the soil of our heart, the good seed cannot thrive. They will smother our good resolves and acts of virtue, and will finally weaken and completely paralyze our desire to advance in perfection.

Oh, that my heart were good ground, teeming with an upright good will, that in all humility, recollection and detachment, I would yield fruits of virtue, zeal and edification, in patience, even a hundredfold. Is not my heart preoccupied with excessive cares concerning my office, my health, the future? Do I not frequently choke the good seed in my heart by idle thoughts, conversations, and worldly ambitions?

Affections: O my God, how great is Thy goodness, to condescend to speak to us poor mortals, and to scatter the exceedingly precious seed of Thy divine word into our hearts. Can I ever sufficiently appreciate this great boon, and adequately venerate Thy sacred Word? I will hear it attentively and with absolute submission of my will, and like Mary, my mother and model, preserve it solicitously in my heart. Help me, Blessed Mother of the Eternal Word, to prepare the soil of my heart for this divine seed, to banish distractions, self-love and excessive solicitude, that in patience and humility, in silence and holy recollection I may yield fruits of salvation and perfection, yes, according to the promises of Christ, even a hundredfold.

Resolution: I will carefully watch over my heart, and banish from it all obstacles to divine grace.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth!"

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR MONDAY

CONTINUATION OF CHRIST'S DISCOURSE AT THE LAST SUPPER

"Abide in My love. If you keep My commandments you shall abide in My love; as I, also, have kept My Father's commandments and do abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be filled" (John 15, 9-11).

First Prelude: Kneel at the feet of Jesus and reverently hear Him admonishing the disciples before leaving them.

Second Prelude: Divine Saviour, give me a firm and enduring love for Thee; grant me grace to find in it my joy and happiness.

First Point

"ABIDE IN MY LOVE"

Knowing our extraordinary weakness and inconstancy, as well as the many sufferings of this mortal life, our Divine Saviour lovingly willed to arm us against the dangers and afford us help and consolation. "As the Father hath loved Me, so do I love you." What a source of consolation! What happiness for us poor mortals to be the objects of the love of God—the eternal, unchangeable, all-good, and all-powerful One! In the possession of His love we need fear no evil, but without it, our heart, not finding rest, will easily fall a prey to its enemies! Therefore our Saviour adds: "Abide in My love," and tells us explicitly how to do this, how to preserve the precious treasure of His love. "If you keep My commandments you shall abide in My love, as I, also, have kept My Father's commandments and do abide in His love."

During His whole life, our Divine Saviour gave us the example of obedience to the Law of God, to the Will of His heavenly Father, and herein we must imitate Him. This imitation, however, exacts our whole attention and all our solicitude, because the enemies of Jesus, namely, the world, Satan, and our own corrupt nature, constantly urge us to break away from His love. Let us resist their attacks at the outset, and by fidelity in little things merit the grace to be faithful in greater ones. Let us, above all, in every danger and assault, at once take refuge to Jesus that He may Himself ever keep us in His love.

Second Point

THE EFFECTS OF HIS LOVE

"These things I have spoken to you that My joy may be in you and your joy may be filled," said our Blessed Lord to His disciples and through them to us. Sin has converted this earth into a vale of tears, where sufferings and misery abound. Our Divine Saviour came to redeem mankind and to secure for His true disciples holy joy, as fruit of the reconciliation and the love of God. The false, fleeting earthly pleasures are accompanied by unrest, fear, and pangs of conscience, and lead to eternal perdition, but the joy of the Holy Spirit fills the soul with peace and tranquillity, giving it a foretaste of heavenly bliss. This joy buoyed up the saints in the midst of suffering and martyrdom.

We, too, should find joy in the thought of the infinite love of God for us, in implicit trust in His Divine Providence, and in the hope of His promises. Above all, there is joy in the assurance that we please Him by our fidelity. In truth, how pleasing to our Divine Bridegroom is our

inviolable love in which no creature is suffered to have part,—how pleasing to Him, our faithful service and our intimate converse with Him! He enlightens and purifies us ever more, and incessantly stimulates us to perfection. Oh, that we should be found worthy of such happiness! What genuine interior joy should we then taste in God, our Saviour, the sole object of our love! We should then find delight in those things, only, that promote His honor, rejoice in His power, His greatness, His bliss, in all His mysteries, in all that tends to the salvation of souls and the exaltation of Holy Mother Church. We should rejoice in our trials and difficulties, because through them we participate in the sufferings of Jesus, and with Him glorify the heavenly Father. Our joy, too, being grounded in God and the accomplishment of His holy Will should then be perfect.

Let us strive to become deeply penetrated with the conviction that a spirit of sacrifice and undivided surrender of our hearts to God are the essence of true joy, and that the most self-sacrificing religious are always the happiest. O my soul, that thou wouldst seek no other happiness in this life than to taste and enjoy the love of thy God!

Affections: O Jesus, enrich me with the precious treasure of Thy love and permit not that it ever be lessened or entirely extinguished in my heart. Grant that Thy love may abide in me and I, in Thy love. Give me a strong, generous, and energetic love, that I may strive earnestly to secure my election, render it firm and irrevocable by good works. Let me share in the happiness and perfect joy of a truly faithful soul, devoted wholly to Thee. Confirm me in Thy love, till I shall be inseparably united with Thee for all eternity.

Resolution: I will endeavor to perform all my actions

in union with my dear Saviour and in the manner most pleasing to Him.

Spiritual Bouquet: "If you keep My commandments you shall abide in My love."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR TUESDAY

CONTINUATION OF CHRIST'S DISCOURSES

"I will not call you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth. But I have called you friends because all things whatsoever I have heard of My Father I have made known to you. You have not chosen Me but I have chosen you, and have appointed you that you should go, and should bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain" (John 15, 15, 16).

First Prelude: Remain at the feet of Jesus, in union with the Apostles, and with profoundest reverence gather the proofs of love that He bestows upon His devoted ones.

Second Prelude: O my beloved Saviour, let me realize what I must do to enjoy the happiness of Thy special friendship.

First Point

JESUS CALLS US FRIENDS

What happiness to be called a friend of Jesus, and to be such in truth! This happiness is ours; Jesus wills to be our friend, to associate with us as a friend with his friend; He wills to communicate to us, confidentially, the mysteries that His Father commissioned Him to reveal. Would we share this privilege and secure it for ourselves we must

contemplate the divine mysteries in their application to our lives. What then are the conditions of the special friendship of Jesus? He Himself tells us: "You are my friend if you do the things that I command you." For us, who wish to be among His favored, most intimate and best friends, it will not suffice merely to observe the commandments, which are of obligation for salvation. He secretly reveals to us the special precepts of His love, and unfolds to us His heart's desires, when He urges us to avoid the least infidelity, to correct our imperfections, to practice virtue, in short, to please Him in all things. Such is the burning, magnanimous love He expects of His true friends. Such is the love that manifests itself particularly when there is question of sharing the sufferings of the friend.

If a friend desires only to rejoice with his friend, but refuses to suffer for him, his friendship is not sincere. How ungrateful were not one who should hesitate to requite, at least with little sacrifices, the greater and more painful ones made for him, even if his friend besought him! Would he further dare to presume upon the love of his friend?

I do not lack opportunities to prove my love to Jesus daily, even hourly. Have I not frequently ignored them, perhaps, even resisted His pressing petitions for a proof of my friendship? Can He call me friend in the presence of His holy angels?

Second Point

GOD HAS CALLED US TO HIS SERVICE BY A SPECIAL GRACE

"Not you have chosen Me," said our Lord to His disciples, "but I have chosen you." Perhaps when we left the world to consecrate ourselves to God in the religious

state, we foolishly imagined that we were rendering God a great service and doing much to promote His honor. But has not even a brief stay in the house of God made it clear to us that by entering religion we conferred the greatest benefit upon ourselves? Oh, happy realization that the call to religious life is an inestimable grace! "I have chosen you," Jesus says to His Apostles and also to us. I have drawn you after Me, have given you the strength to overcome obstacles, to make every sacrifice; I have overwhelmed you with graces, that you may continue My work. I have chosen you for My special service. Now you, in turn, should testify to the world that the religion I have founded is a law of love, that My yoke is sweet and My burden light. Are we fully penetrated with the dignity of our vocation and do we strive to prove our gratitude by persevering fidelity?

Daily new proofs of the love of God force themselves upon us in support of the greatness of our election! Could we still be so blind as to believe that we have given God anything of value when we exchanged the perishable goods of this world for the inexpressible happiness of being a spouse of Christ? Oh, that daily, even hourly, our gratitude were commensurate with the incalculable benefit of our sublime vocation, a gift wholly undeserved! Let us strive diligently ever to strengthen and increase in us the graces, the enlightenments, the consolations and comforts that are ours through the goodness of God. Let us labor to achieve fruits of salvation and perfection that we may not prove unworthy of our election, for not the call to the religious state secures us life everlasting but our fidelity in co-operating with God's grace. Let us beg the Apostles, who corresponded so faithfully to their sublime calling, to support us with their powerful intercession, that we, too,

may walk worthy of our exalted vocation, for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Has not my conduct frequently been unworthy of *my* holy state? Instead of bringing forth fruits of virtue, have I, perhaps, been guilty of bad example by my lack of charity and zeal?

Affections: Divine Saviour, how can I thank Thee adequately for having deigned to call me to Thy divine friendship! How often have I rendered myself wholly unworthy of such an inestimable grace by lack of charity and fidelity, by negligence and tepidity! Pardon, O my beloved Saviour, for this ingratitude! Henceforth, I will prefer Thy friendship to all else, and seek my rest, my consolation and all my happiness for time and for eternity, in Thee, alone.

Resolution: To render myself more worthy of the grace of my election I will perform my daily duties with renewed fervor.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Not you have chosen Me, but I have chosen you."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR WEDNESDAY

CHRIST'S PONTIFICAL PRAYER

"These things Jesus spoke and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said: 'Father, the hour is come, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee. As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to all whom Thou hast given Him' " (John 17, 1-2).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus after the Last Supper,

raising His eyes to heaven and addressing His sublime prayer to the heavenly Father.

Second Prelude: O Divine Saviour, let me share the sentiments of Thy love-inflamed Heart, revealed to us in Thy pontifical prayer.

First Point

"FATHER, THE HOUR IS COME"

Having once more lovingly instructed His disciples, consoled and addressed them most tenderly as "Little Children" (John 13, 33), "Friends" (John 15, 15), our Divine Saviour raised His eyes to heaven and said: "Father, the hour is come!" Oh, with what desire had Jesus during the time of His whole life desired this hour —the hour of His abasement and suffering, the hour of our redemption! "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished" (Luke 12, 50). It was to this hour that He referred when He bade His Apostles rejoice with Him: "If you loved Me, you would indeed, be glad because I go to the Father" (John 14, 28). Still He chose to go to the Father by a burdensome and exceedingly painful and bloody way. His bitter passion and cruel death, all the humiliations and contempt that He was to endure were ever present to His divine omniscience. What are our sentiments when sufferings confront us, when there is question of making a sacrifice for the honor of God, for our own and our neighbor's salvation? How we dread this hour! We think only of our sufferings, not seldom magnified by our imagination to such proportions as to make us forgetful of all else. Does not the generosity of the Heart of Jesus put us to shame? How little we understand, and how slow we are to imitate it!

Jesus counts all His sufferings, all the contempt and disgrace heaped upon Him as naught, knowing that through them He can effect our ransom, inundate us with heavenly joy and finally crown us with never-ending honor and glory. Let us show ourselves true disciples of our Blessed Lord in hours of spiritual darkness, and not presume to enjoy the fruits of His dark hour, while seeking only our comfort.

Second Point

THE SAVIOUR PRAYS FOR THOSE WHOM THE FATHER HAS GIVEN HIM

What a consolation for us to know that in His dark hour of suffering the Saviour prayed for us. Even then He offered the price of His Precious Blood for us, at which dear rate the Father presented us to Him as His redeemed. Oh, that we would often consider at what price we have been purchased! Must not our hearts be filled with love and gratitude toward God, with fear and mistrust toward ourselves? Could we ever forget the love with which Christ has snatched us from the clutches of Satan? Could we ever desist from holding fast to Him in persevering, humble prayer?

The Father has given us to Him, and His we will be with all that we are and have. Should this consciousness not reanimate our faith, strengthen our hope, and inflame our love anew? To whom do we belong? To the heavenly Father's only begotten Son—"The powerful almighty God, who reigns for all eternity, and has power over death and hell." He is our most amiable Lord, our most loyal Father, our most tender Bridegroom. We belong wholly to Jesus. How could we fear, even though we walk

in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death! He will provide for us; He will protect and guide us, because we are His. He will never forsake us, unless we turn away from Him, not even if we betray Him through infidelity, and become entangled in the thorns of passion. He, the Good Shepherd, will pursue us and neither rest nor relent until He has reclaimed us. To whom else should we wish to belong than to our Saviour, Who alone can make us happy for time and for eternity?

Do I love my neighbor only in God and for God's sake? Can I truly say that I belong wholly and unreservedly to Jesus? Which passion or evil inclination can dispute His right to my heart?

Affections: O my Saviour, how slow am I to follow Thee! When the hour has come for me to suffer for Thine and Thy Father's honor and for my salvation, how weak and ineffectual does my love then appear! How easily do I complain of the least suffering, of the slightest humiliation! O my Divine Saviour, let the power of Thy prayer manifest itself in me! Behold, I am wholly and entirely Thine and wish to be Thine forever. I pray Thee, let the plenitude of Thy graces and the excess of Thy merit satisfy my defects and repair my infidelities, that I, too, may be able to say: "Lord, I have glorified Thee on earth, I have faithfully fulfilled Thy holy Will and accomplished the work Thou hast entrusted to me!"

Resolution: In the hour of prayer and sacrifice I will unite myself with my Saviour and beg Him to impart to me the sentiments of His Sacred Heart.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Father, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee."

Prayer: Our Father . . .

MEDITATION FOR THURSDAY

CONTINUATION OF CHRIST'S PONTIFICAL PRAYER

"I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me; because they are Thine—They are not of the world as I also am not of the world. And not for them only do I pray but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me. That they all may be one as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in us" (John 17, 9, 16, 20-21).

First Prelude: In spirit, enter the Supper Hall and with greatest reverence listen to our Divine Saviour's prayer to His heavenly Father for His disciples and for all who should in future believe in Him.

Second Prelude: O my Divine Saviour, replenish us with Thy Holy Spirit that by charity and concord we may foster intimate union with Thee to the best of our ability.

First Point

JESUS DESIRES TO SAFEGUARD US AGAINST THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD

Our infinitely compassionate Saviour prayed "not for the world," but for all men that they might cease to live according to its spirit. His words: "I pray not for the world," corroborate the woe that He had pronounced upon it on a former occasion. Who loves the world is an enemy of God. He makes light of sin, which is always an infinite offense against the infinite love of God. The Apostle St. John accordingly admonishes us: "Love not the world, nor the things which are in this world. If any man love the world the charity of the Father is not in Him" (John 1, 15). The worldling incessantly strives

for its transitory goods. He is a victim of pride, independence, and gratification of the sensual appetites, and is utterly unfit to receive the spirit of God. What an incentive for us to renounce the false maxims of the world as we once did in Baptism through our sponsor! We renewed these solemn promises on the day of our first Holy Communion and confirmed them on entering religion. It were dangerous self-deception, however, to consider ourselves secure in our present holy state, and to imagine that in the seclusion of the cloister we have nothing to fear.

Let us be on our guard—the prejudices of the world and its errors can gain access even to the cloister. Let us aspire to the virtues that are diametrically opposed to the worldly spirit, namely, religious modesty, simplicity, filial piety, lively faith, firm hope, and ever increasing love. Let us esteem holy poverty, religious obedience, and purity of heart which flees from the mere shadow of sin and shuns dangerous occasions. Even the smallest of these acts of virtue is of more value than a thousand worlds. We will, therefore, practice these virtues in union with our Divine Saviour and like Him we, too, shall glorify the Father. Thus, our dear Lord Himself shall be glorified through us, as He was glorified in His Apostles and all the saints.

Could it be possible that I, who am called to glorify the heavenly Father and His only begotten Son, should further be remiss and negligent in His service? Dare I presume to have fully conquered the spirit of the world and acquired the spirit of Christ? How deeply am I indebted to our Divine Saviour for having extricated me from the dangers of the world! What shall constitute my return for this inestimable grace?

Second Point

JESUS PRAYS THAT HIS DISCIPLES MAY BE ONE

"Holy Father, keep them in Thy name whom Thou hast given Me: that they may be one as we also are" (John 17, 11). Thus spoke Jesus, manifesting at once His burning desire to see love and concord reign among all who claim to belong to Him. He prays for His Apostles and all the faithful of His Church, that they may be one, also, in the externals of divine worship by observing the same liturgy and rites. We all should be of one heart, one soul and one body, whose head is Jesus. How great and sublime is our Holy Catholic Church for this reason, alone! In her is mirrored faithfully the unity of the Blessed Trinity.

Oh, how our heart expands when we think of the communion of the faithful on earth with all who have gone before us and are yet to come after us! Daily we commemorate this communion of saints, the fruit of Christ's prayer to His heavenly Father. How great is our obligation as religious to sacrifice all, to preserve and foster perfect conformity of minds and hearts among us, which makes for true happiness in religious life! What a glorious spectacle for heaven and earth, what joy for the Saviour to realize His Heart's desire so pre-eminently in the hearts of those whom He has overwhelmed with graces! In His infinite love He prays, also, for us that where He is, we may be; where the head is, there the members must be.

In this world, however, the Saviour can be found in renunciation, in humiliations, in sufferings and self-denial. Only thus could He enter into His glory. Would we share His glory with Him in the next world, then we must

walk the paths that He once trod—the narrow and difficult paths of self-denial. Behold, my soul, the work you must accomplish, if the Saviour's prayer is to be effectual in you.

Do I follow my Saviour in privations, in poverty, in the self-denial inseparable from obedience and renunciation? Am I not occasionally at fault when charity is disturbed in the community?

Affections: O my God, sever me ever more and more from this perverted world, inspire me with hatred of its errors and false maxims, that this aversion may preserve me from imbibing its spirit, and assist me in evading its snares. Thy Divine Heart, O Jesus, shall be my secure refuge. Let me become ever more closely riveted to Thee. Give this grace to all my fellow religious, that we may all be one among ourselves as Thou art one with the Father. O blessed union of all the faithful here below, of all the members with their head, be the pledge and the commencement of that eternal felicity, for which the Saviour besought His heavenly Father in His pontifical prayer!

Resolution: We will shun the spirit of the world and live in sincere love and harmony with our fellow religious.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Holy Father, keep them in Thy name whom Thou hast given Me; that they may be one as we also are."

Prayer: Our Father . . .

MEDITATION FOR FRIDAY

JESUS FOREWARNS HIS APOSTLES

"Jesus said to them: All you shall be scandalized in Me this night. For it is written! I will strike the shep-

herd and the sheep of the flock shall be dispersed. Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren" (Matt. 26, 31—Luke 22, 31-32).

First Prelude: In spirit join the disciples and listen with a wholesome fear to our dear Lord's prophetic warnings.

Second Prelude: Grant me grace, O my Saviour, to accept Thy salutary counsels and admonitions gratefully that I may profit by them.

First Point

THE SAVIOUR FORETOLD THE APOSTLES THEIR INFIDELITY

After the parting words of our Divine Saviour and His sublime pontifical prayer, He directed the minds of His Apostles to His pending passion, and once more cautioned them of the dangers they were facing. "All you shall be scandalized in Me this night." Jesus wished to say that they should be seized by fear and anxiety, by mistrust and cowardice. They should not know what to think of Him in such a pitiable condition. All that He had ever told them concerning His love, His power and glory, of His going to the Father, they should then have completely forgotten. He quoted the testimony of the prophet: "I will strike the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered" (Zach. 13, 7). The Apostles, Peter, most of all, certainly believed nothing short of the impossibility of such faithlessness, such weakness. Hence, the Master addressed him in particular saying: "Simon,

Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat."

How solicitous was Jesus for His Apostles whom He would so gladly have preserved from the fall! He manifests the same solicitude for us also. How often does He warn us of dangers threatening us—now through interior enlightenment, then again through the admonitions of His representatives, or the good example of our fellow religious. If we love God, the enemy of our soul will vouchsafe us no rest. He desires to sift us—that is to assail us with violent temptations. Jesus, to whom nothing is hidden, neither in heaven nor on earth, neither in the hearts of men nor with reference to the desires of the evil spirits, prayed for us, and though Satan is very powerful, he can do us no harm without the express permission of God. Let us always have recourse to God, and all the onslaughts of the Tempter shall have no other effect than to purify the wheat, namely, our virtues, of the chaff of earthly dross and imperfections.

Second Point

WHY THE APOSTLES PROVED UNFAITHFUL

The Saviour had so frequently and forcibly prevailed upon His disciples to preserve faith, hope, and peace of soul. Again and again He had spoken to them of His passion, but they understood Him not, or would not understand Him, otherwise, they should certainly have asked Him how to conduct themselves in this trial. In foolish presumption, however, they assured Him of their loyalty; Peter even declared Himself ready to go into prison and death with Him, and assured the Saviour that though all should be scandalized in Him, he should not be. Peter

deemed it impossible, in vain presumption, ever to grow weak, and because of this foolish self-esteem, he deserved to fall more deeply than all the rest. Peter and the other Apostles had volunteered to die with Jesus, though He did not ask it of them, but they utterly disregarded what had been so urgently enjoined upon them. Was it not their bounden duty to watch and pray with Him and to trust implicitly in His promises?

Do we not frequently act likewise? In foolish self-confidence, we are anxious to do extraordinary things for God, to bear a great cross with our Saviour, which flatters self-love, but we neglect our momentary simple duty, with the result that we accomplish neither the one nor the other, and fall deplorably. Have we not frequently after Holy Communion and during the time of meditation testified our love to Jesus, and offered ourselves for the greatest sacrifices, but afterwards, refused Him even the least He demanded of us through His inspirations or our Holy Rule?

What are my sentiments when my superiors caution me against a danger? How do I observe the circumspection recommended to me by my Holy Rule and the counsels of my superiors?

Affections: O my God, how often have I resembled the Apostles in their weakness and inconstancy! How seldom have I sought to profit by Thy counsels and admonitions! Forgetting to have recourse to Thee, I have, in presumptuous self-confidence, foolishly relied on my own strength. Pardon, O Lord, my weak faith, my infidelity! In future, I will seek strength and courage in time of danger and temptation through humble, confiding prayer. Like Mary, my holy mother and model, I will trust invincibly in Thy promises and thus preserve peace

of soul and perfect abandonment to Thy all-governing, loving Providence.

Resolution: I will discharge all my duties conscientiously and in every difficulty have recourse to prayer.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Watch and pray, lest ye fall into temptation."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR SATURDAY

JESUS EXHORTS HIS APOSTLES TO HAVE CONFIDENCE

"Jesus said to them: 'When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, did you want anything?' But they said, 'Nothing' " (Luke 22, 35).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus in the midst of His disciples lovingly reminding them of the proofs of Divine Providence received in the past.

Second Prelude: In the remembrance of Thy touching solicitude for me in the past, O Lord, let me cherish a tender, unbounded confidence in Thee for the future.

First Point

THE SOLICITUDE OF OUR DIVINE LORD FOR HIS DISCIPLES

Though Jesus foretold the infidelity of the disciples, He saw their sincere, earnest good will. To strengthen and console them in the coming heavy trials, Jesus reminded them of the past when He had so lovingly assisted them in all needs, had ever shown Himself their Redeemer, the only begotten Son of the heavenly Father. He, therefore, asked them gently: "When I sent you

without purse, and scrip, and shoes, did you want anything?" They were constrained to answer that nothing had ever been wanting them.

Could Jesus not put the same question to us? If we cast a glance into our past life, must we not confess with the Apostles that the same Good Shepherd has never suffered us to want anything? When He sent us, that is, when we complied with holy obedience, we lacked nothing, neither temporal nor heavenly goods; Divine Providence supplied all our needs. How much should we, therefore, trust in the power and goodness of our God! How often has Jesus even miraculously aided souls, who, forgetful of all earthly things and relying solely on Him, sought first the kingdom of God and His Justice. We find most touching proofs of such implicit trust in the life of St. Charles Borromeo, of St. Vincent de Paul, of St. Teresa and many other saints, and read thereof in the chronicles of religious houses. Let us then, likewise, trust in the goodness of our so opulent and lovingly solicitous heavenly Father, especially when we seem to lack the gifts and talents necessary for the discharge of the duties of our vocation. Our Divine Saviour knows our needs. If He wants our labors to be effective, He will supply what we are lacking—if He wishes to try us by failure, He will direct the humiliation to His honor and our salvation, provided we have put forth our best efforts. But why is many a soul so discouraged and dejected, so dissatisfied with the dispensation of almighty God? Why are many duties fulfilled so reluctantly? Because these respective souls lack the spirit of confiding, trustful prayer.

May the remembrance of the prodigies of divine grace manifested in our past life, strengthen, comfort and

encourage us in sufferings and tribulations. May we never relinquish our trust in the protection and assistance of God, but may our confidence and firm reliance on Him grow proportionately as our trials and sufferings are multiplied.

Have I not through lack of confidence placed obstacles to the grace of God? Do I avail myself of sufferings and difficulties to increase and strengthen my trust in Him?

Second Point

OUR CONFIDENCE IN GOD SHOULD BE UNBOUNDED

If the Apostles had trustingly had recourse to Jesus in the hour of temptation and danger, they should not have fallen into despair, fear and faithlessness. For us, too—would we remain faithful to Jesus—it is essential to trust implicitly in Him, alone, and rely neither on ourselves nor on others. Jesus is infinitely good and loves us as His children. If we cast a hurried glance over our past life, we shall see that He has always dealt mercifully with us. He has often preserved us from sin, kept aloof many dangerous occasions of sin, and if we have, nevertheless, actually fallen, He mercifully pardoned us in the excess of His paternal love. The graces He has bestowed upon us are so numerous, that only in eternity shall we be able to recount them all.

Our confidence in God, therefore, should be boundless and commensurate with our weakness and misery. How difficult soever perfection may seem, with the grace of God it is possible for us to attain it. Looking upon ourselves, we must truly say: It is impossible; but looking up to God; we may add with St. Paul: "I can do all

things in Him Who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4, 13). True, the violent and numerous attacks of the Evil One are directed primarily at religious to rob them of their trust in God, for he knows full well how such confidence honors God. Unrelenting in his efforts, especially in the case of religious, the favored disciples of Christ, the Evil One seeks to shatter their childlike trust in God, by tempting them to mistrust, to despondency and despair. He even knows as "father of lies," how to deceive us to such an extent as to make us regard our lack of confidence as humility.

What can be said of my confidence? Am I convinced that God demands a greater degree of trust of religious, and that He imparts His graces according to the measure of their surrender?

Affections: "In Thee, O Lord, I place all my trust, my only hope, and I shall never be confounded." What mercy and love hast Thou shown me, O Jesus! Why should I not hope all things from Thee for the future? Strengthen and confirm my confidence, which is in truth, a proof of Thy infinite love for me. In future, all sufferings and reverses shall serve to rivet me closer to Thee, that I may say with the love of a child, wholly devoted to Thee: "My Father, I place all my trust in Thee."

Resolution: In every grief and suffering I will have recourse to my Saviour with childlike and humble confidence.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Lord, increase my hope!"

Prayer: Jesus, my Lord, my King . . .

MEDITATION FOR QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

JESUS FORETELLS HIS PASSION TO HIS DISCIPLES

"And they were on the way going up to Jerusalem: and Jesus went before them, and they were astonished, and following they were afraid. And taking again the twelve He began to tell them the things that should befall Him saying: 'Behold, we go up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man shall be betrayed to the chief priests, and to the Scribes and the ancients, and they shall condemn Him to death and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles'" (Mark 10, 32-33).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus in the company of His disciples going to Jerusalem.

Second Prelude: Let me ever better realize the infinite love with which Thou, O Jesus, didst enter upon Thy passion, that I may love Thee more ardently and follow Thee more closely.

First Point

JESUS CONFIDES THE MYSTERY OF HIS PASSION TO HIS DISCIPLES

Our Divine Saviour had twice foretold His passion to His disciples. Now he announced it once more, in the valley of the Jordan, where heaven had opened upon Him and the voice of the heavenly Father had proclaimed Him His well-beloved Son, and where He Himself had said: "It becometh us to fulfill all justice" (Matt. 3, 15). Here he addressed His Apostles whom He had called apart from the other disciples, and gathered about Him-

self, saying: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem and all shall be fulfilled what the prophets foretold, concerning the Son of Man."

To them, as His elect, He imparted the mystery of His passion and referred them to the prophets, whose words were soon to be verified. The Apostles, full of fear and apprehension for their Divine Master, were amazed at the rapidity with which He preceded them, facing danger so magnanimously. By the exact prediction of His suffering, even in the minutest details, Jesus willed to confirm their faith, so that they would not doubt in Him when they should see Him in His abasement. In the fulfillment of this prophecy He willed to give them a new proof of His Divinity. How admirably was this revelation calculated to encourage the Apostles and to reanimate faith and love in them!

O my soul, our Blessed Saviour has chosen thee, also, to share most intimately the mysteries of His love! He would often encourage thee, also, to walk "His ways" by reminding thee of His infinite love and sacred passion. So many, alas, do not understand the mystery of the cross! Distracted and lukewarm souls fail to comprehend it because they do not sufficiently ponder it. They see the image of the Crucified, they assist at the unbloody renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross, which was consummated for them on Calvary, but their unbridled spirit fails to grasp the stupendous mystery. Likewise, effeminate souls, who are opposed to suffering and who lose patience in the least affliction, who anxiously keep aloof whatever might cause them pain, who fly from penance and mortification, and who seek in all things self-gratification, fail to comprehend it. The lesson of the cross is understood by those only who accept sufferings cheerfully at the hand of God,

who crucify their flesh and gladly participate in the sufferings of Jesus. These are His most intimate friends, to whom He vouchsafes new consolation and strength in the contemplation of His passion and death.

To which class do I belong? Can it not be said of me that I have but little understanding of such things?

Second Point

JESUS ASKS US TO SHARE HIS SUFFERINGS WITH HIM

"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem," says Jesus, calling our attention to the fact that He does not will to walk the way alone, but that He desires us to accompany Him. He knows full well that there is no other way to true peace and happiness than the way of the cross. For this reason He constantly urges and presses His elect to make sacrifices, to mortify themselves and to do penance. Looking upon the Saviour, what could souls who truly love Him find difficult or irksome? They go "to Jerusalem" with Him, to embrace crosses, contempt and humiliations. Even if, like the Apostles, they recoil in consequence of weak nature, they take refuge with Jesus and seek new courage and strength in the contemplation of His sufferings and His infinite love.

Let us thank our beloved Saviour that He reveals to us more and more the mystery of the cross and permits us to share His sufferings. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem," He seems to say to us when the injunctions of obedience are repugnant to nature. When we note the generosity with which Jesus fulfilled the Will of His heavenly Father, and the love that quickened His steps as He hurried on to Jerusalem, leading the way for His disciples, should we not be prepared for any trial? "Behold, we

go up to Jerusalem" He exhorts us when we shrink from humiliations.

What a shame if the spouse refused to accompany her Bridegroom on the rough and thorny way which He walked so lovingly! In the face of such a truth, could we hesitate to walk the same way with our dear Lord? "Behold, we go to Jerusalem!" Oh, that we were mindful of these words of Jesus in every suffering and trial, in every reverse; that with sincere good will and determination we were ready to say with St. Thomas: "Let us also go that we may die with Him" (John 11, 15). What sacrifice will I make today to console my Jesus, when so many children of the world leave him to walk the ways of sin?

Affections: O my Jesus, for love of me Thou embracest sufferings and death, and I, Thy spouse, should flee from the least sacrifice, evade the slightest humiliation! No, that is not loving Thee truly! Oh, how am I filled with confusion when I consider how much Thou hast done for me and how slight is my return. Ah, destroy such abominable self-love in my heart, O my beloved Saviour. Grant that my love may be true, generous and constant, and that I may rejoice in being able to testify my love by sacrifices.

Resolution: I will be zealous in making sacrifices for Jesus today in order to atone for my own infidelity and for the sins of others.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR MONDAY

THE SUFFERINGS INFLICTED ON THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS BY THE INGRATITUDE AND THE INSULTS OF MEN

"The Son of Man shall be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes and the ancients, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles. And they shall mock Him and spit upon Him, and scourge Him and kill Him" (Mark 10, 33-34).

First Prelude: Behold our Divine Saviour surrounded by His disciples, to whom He foretells all the circumstances of His painful death.

Second Prelude: O my Divine Saviour, grant me a burning love of Thee, that it may incite me to make reparation by prayer and sacrifice.

First Point

LOVE SHOULD INDUCE US TO MAKE REPARATION TO OUR LORD

A prophecy concerning the Son of Man is today being fulfilled, namely, that "He should be delivered to the Gentiles, maltreated and spat upon." In these days of levity, the passion of our Divine Saviour is most painfully renewed by the sinful excesses of the children of the world. They challenge His justice, despise His goodness, abuse His favors. How many innocent hearts are led astray by bad example! How many are perverted by pernicious principles, and allured away from the Saviour! Is it, therefore, not the duty of the friends of Jesus to share these sufferings with Him, to visit and to console Him? He is exposed for adoration on our altars and

asks especially us, His spouses, to render Him loving service. Kneeling in His holy presence we will think of those who, by their daily conduct, renew the dreadful proceedings that once were witnessed in the court of Pilate, of those who lacerate their Saviour with the scourges of intemperance and debauchery, who by their wicked plans, by pride and perversion, press the horrible crown of thorns into His sacred Head, of those who deride and ridicule Him by their sinful excesses! We will hear the touching complaint of the Saviour by the lips of the royal prophet: "I looked for one to compassionate Me, but there was none." We will immolate ourselves to Jesus as victims of reparation, and offer ourselves to suffer willingly in His stead.

Let us, further, consider how deeply we are indebted to Him for having led us out of the sinful world and into His holy service. What would, probably, have become of us in the turmoil of this world, since, in spite of the many graces with which Jesus overwhelms us daily, even hourly, we are still so imperfect, so fickle, and so averse to mortification! Let us, then, implore pardon of our Divine Lord for our own ingratitude, and at the same time strive to atone for the misdeeds of our blinded brethren and beg enlightenment and conversion for them. Am I animated by a strong desire to console Jesus in as much as lies in my power, and to save the souls so dear to Him?

Second Point

HOW WE SHOULD SEEK TO CONSOLE OUR LORD

During these days of licentiousness, the children of the world seek enjoyment in gayety and revelry, but instead of tasting the pleasures they crave, they are satiated

with bitterness, with disappointments and discontent. What nobler, what loftier delights does not Jesus grant us in the adorable Sacrament of the Altar! He calls us to the companionship of the holy angels surrounding His Altar, the throne of His Love, where we may remain in His Divine Presence. The children of the world seek distractions in social intercourse, but how frivolous their conversations frequently are! Even the Holiest is not spared their taunts and jests. Shall we not, therefore, with redoubled fervor observe silence and recollection? Shall we not deem ourselves exceedingly happy, in being permitted to hold communion with Jesus in the seclusion of our hearts, to employ our tongue in the praise and glorification of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar and incessantly to offer Jesus acts of praise and thanksgiving, of love and adoration in reparation of all the outrages heaped upon Him by evil tongues, in particular, of all blasphemies?

Again, the children of the world seek pleasure in sensual gratification, sin through intemperance in eating and drinking, and risk all to gratify their lusts. Can we think that too much is required of us when for the love of Jesus, for the salvation of souls, we are asked to deny ourselves, to practice self-imposed mortifications? Oh, what deplorable sacrifices do not the children of the world often make! They sacrifice all they have—their precious time, health and vigor, even life itself—in order to enjoy a foolish, fleeting, sensual pleasure, for which they frequently forfeit the noblest, the highest good—their immortal soul. How weak is our love of Jesus, if we are not willing to sacrifice cheerfully the little things He requires of us, which would make us happy even here below and secure to us an eternal, all-surpassing glory.

What sacrifices will I make today to observe the rule of silence, to mortify my evil propensities, to suppress curiosity, and especially to struggle against the fault which is most opposed to my spiritual progress?

Affections: Prostrate before Thy Tabernacle, O Jesus, with profound humility and reverence we renew with our whole heart the promises of our love and oblation wherewith we long to repair the insults heaped upon Thee, especially during these days. The more the children of the world revile and insult Thee, the more we will praise Thee in the adorable Sacrament of the Altar. The more they despise Thy love, the more we will love and adore Thee, and immolate ourselves wholly to Thy love. The more they transgress Thy holy commandments, the better we will observe them, and rejoice Thy loving Heart by the practice of every virtue. The more the wicked mislead and ruin souls by bad example, the more we will seek to promote their salvation by prayer and good example. O holiest Heart of my Saviour, impart Thy spirit of zeal and love to us in such generous measure that here below we may glorify Thee in perfect love, and may be found worthy to rejoice with Thee in Thy kingdom for all eternity.

Resolution: I will strive zealously to make reparation of honor to Jesus by frequent acts of love, of praise, and of adoration.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Praised and blessed be the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar!"

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR TUESDAY

JESUS IN THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT THE VICTIM OF EXPIATION FOR OUR SINS

"Behold the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world" (John 1, 29).

First Prelude: Behold the priest elevating the Sacred Host with profound reverence, at the same time pronouncing the words: "Behold the Lamb of God."

Second Prelude: O my Saviour, Who in infinite love didst take my sins and those of the whole world upon Thyself, grant me grace always to assist at the renewal of the Holy Sacrifice with sentiments of gratitude and thus render myself worthy to participate in its precious fruits.

First Point

JESUS TAKES AWAY THE SINS OF THE WORLD BY HIS PRAYER

What consolation must it afford us to hear from the lips of the priest: "Behold the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world!" The Apostle assures us (Hebr. 5, 7) that Jesus, our true High-priest, during His life on earth, with prayers and tears supplicated the heavenly Father for us. This supplication He continues to the end of time in the adorable Sacrament of the Altar. Knowing that it is impossible for God to resist the petitions of His servants, that He heard Moses whenever he interceded for the ungrateful people, that we find in the lives of the Saints countless proofs that testify to this truth, what dare we not expect of a prayer which Jesus incessantly by day and by night, offers to the heavenly

Father in our behalf! We may safely assume that for the sake of such a prayer God has countless times spared a sinful world and withdrawn His chastening hand to give full sway to His mercy. In His fervent prayer, world-wide in its embrace, He is our Mediator and Conciliator. If we unite our supplications with His, the coldness of our hearts will be transformed by contact with the fire of His love, and we shall be able to discharge worthily our duty of expiation, of reparation and of atonement. Oh, that we may be among the pious souls that weary not of pouring out before the Blessed Sacrament their most ardent zeal and love! Let it be our earnest endeavor to console Him by our prayers and to lead back to Him those that have gone astray that the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world, may have mercy on them.

Second Point

CHRIST'S PROPITIATORY SACRIFICE

From the first moment of His Incarnation Jesus considered Himself the Victim of immolation for the sins of the world, and He persevered in these sentiments until His death. At His entrance into the world He spoke to His heavenly Father: "Sacrifice and oblation Thou didst not desire—Burnt offering and sin offering Thou didst not require. Then said I, 'Behold, I come to do Thy Will' " (Ps. 39, 7-8). What sacrifices comprised in this one act! To the present moment, Christ is our High-priest, our Mediator between Heaven's vengeance and the guilty human race, renewing incessantly in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the infinite satisfaction He once made on the cross. Thus He merits pardon for sinners and promotes the cause of His people with the heavenly Father with

infinitely more success than did Moses and Aaron in the desert.

If we are deeply grieved at sight of the magnitude of sin, let us not forget that by His sacrifice on the cross Christ made satisfaction far exceeding the guilt of mankind. In union with these superabundant merits, which Christ continually immolates to His heavenly Father on countless altars, we will offer Him His own Precious Blood in expiation of our sins and those of the whole world. Not even the prayer of all the angels and saints combined is as worthy a reparation in the sight of God, is as capable of drawing so many graces down upon ourselves as the prayer of Jesus when He immolates Himself on our altar, and His sacred Wounds, as it were, cry to heaven in our behalf. The holy Sacrifice of the Mass is a treasure justly appraised only in heaven. Let us, therefore, during this holy season specially dedicated to the remembrance of Christ's passion, renew our fervor and devotion in assisting at holy Mass. The Mass comprises the infinite merits of the bloody Sacrifice of Calvary. But our Divine Saviour expects of us fidelity in the many little sacrifices that He has allotted to us in the course of the day. He wills that, in union with the sacrifice of Christ's Sacred Body and Blood, and His infinite merits, we offer them in advance to the heavenly Father. If our love of Jesus were genuine and our love of neighbor, likewise, how much could and would we do, especially during these days, for poor sinners.

Affections: O my Saviour and my God, in an excess of the tenderest and most marvelous love Thou art uninterruptedly present in the Sacred Mystery of the Altar as Victim and as such, dost immolate Thyself to the heavenly Father daily on countless altars. We thank Thee for

the sacrifice of the Incarnation, for Thy extreme poverty and abasement, for the immolation of Thy Blood and Life, of Thy Humanity and Divinity, for which Thy love-inflamed Heart is the sacrificial Altar. O Jesus, let not such love be in vain bestowed on me. Imbue us all with holy zeal that we may assist at the sublime Sacrifice of the Mass with the proper dispositions, and incessantly offer ourselves through Thee to the honor and glory of the heavenly Father. Thus united with Thee, our Divine Model, we will, inasmuch as we are able, by our prayers, labors and sufferings repair the insults, the abuses and the ignominy heaped upon Thee.

Resolution: I will frequently during the day offer the prayers and self-immolation of the Heart of Jesus to the heavenly Father, in satisfaction for the sins of men.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Behold the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

THE THOUGHT OF DEATH A REMINDER OF PENANCE

"Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return" (Mos. 3, 19).

First Prelude: Hear Holy Mother Church, speaking through the mouth of the priest while he distributes blessed ashes: "Remember, O man, that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return."

Second Prelude: Replenish our hearts, O Lord, with sentiments of true compunction and penance, which Holy Mother Church so ardently desires to infuse into her children at the beginning of this holy season.

First Point

THE ASHES, A REMINDER OF DEATH

With our first parents in paradise we were doomed to die, through the words: "Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return." Holy Church wishes to remind us of this sentence by strewing blessed ashes on our heads. Let us often think of death, especially during the holy season of Lent, for it is a wholesome thought which will preserve us from sin, as the Holy Ghost Himself assures us, "In all thy works remember thy last end and thou shalt never sin" (Eccl. 7, 40). If mankind, instead of grievously offending God, would reflect seriously on death, they would certainly recoil from sin; but they simply banish far from their minds all such thoughts and seek to lull themselves into a false slumber in the turmoil of worldly pleasures.

We, on the contrary, have the great grace to be reminded of death so often; our Holy Rule bids us call it to mind every hour. We often face death, see it in various forms, severing body and soul, now calmly, now in a fierce struggle, but always accosting us with the earnest admonition: "It is appointed unto men to die" (Hebr. 9, 27). How salutary is this admonition, how well calculated to preserve us from tepidity, to help us atone for past sins by penance, and to incite us to persevere in the practice of good works!

Holy Church, therefore, exhorts us to penance today, at the beginning of the Lenten season. Mindful that the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, we should appear before God humbly penitent, and willing to shoulder whatever is bitter or repugnant in the discharge of our duties.

Second Point

THE THOUGHT OF DEATH HELPS US CRUSH OUR EVIL TENDENCIES

"I die daily" (Cor. 15, 31), St. Paul writes to the Corinthians. Let us strive to imitate Him, and accordingly prepare ourselves better for the last moment of our life. How foolish are not most people in this regard! They exert themselves to master the various arts and sciences but at the same time they neglect the one art—to die well. Consequently, death seems to them bitter and hard, and so many die an unhappy death. Religious, on the contrary, have already partly overcome that which renders death so difficult; they have left their relatives for the love of God; have severed all ties of flesh and blood; have sacrificed temporal goods and renounced the joys of life. Jesus is their love, their happiness, their wealth, Whom they confidently hope to possess perfectly throughout eternity. To the good religious, therefore, apply the words: "Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord" (Rev. 14, 13). Would we share this happiness and partake of this bliss, then we must strive earnestly to fix our attention on the things of eternity, and with all diligence labor to acquire the goods which death cannot rob. This evidently imposes many a sacrifice upon our corrupt nature, which we must constantly curb, using violence as the Apostle says: " I die daily." This incessant struggle, this constant self-denial, seems so difficult to him that he terms it "dying." But if we thus daily die the death of the just, we shall at the same time, like them, live happily in Jesus. We shall finally be able to say with St. Paul: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 12, 20). May we practice the art of dying to self, especially during the holy

season of Lent. Everyone is equal to the task, and none should seek to exempt themselves, for by no other form of penance can we give greater joy to our Blessed Lord.

Affections: O my God, I have sinned and deserve Thy just punishment; therefore, I will enter into the spirit of Holy Church and begin the penitential season with sentiments of profound humility, sincere compunction, and holy fervor, that it may truly be for me a time of grace and mercy. Grant that the constant remembrance of death may imbue me with a wholesome fear, and preserve me from sin. Let me daily realize my faults and my utter unworthiness that I may become truly humble, contrite of heart, and thus please God in all my actions. Give us all the grace, O my Saviour, to pass this holy season in silence and holy recollection, and in the earnest effort to advance in perfection.

Resolution: I will be zealous in the practice of the mortifications that are most conducive to my advancement in perfection.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Remember, O man, that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR THURSDAY

PREPARATORY MEDITATION ON THE PASSION

"And I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" (Luke 12, 50).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus, leaving the hall of the Last Supper and going with His disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane, to begin His bitter passion.

Second Prelude: O my Divine Saviour, by the infinite love wherewith Thou didst die for Me, I beseech Thee to imbue my heart with the sentiments requisite to derive great profit from the contemplation of Thy sacred passion.

First Point

LOVE, THE MOTIVE OF OUR LORD'S SUFFERINGS

Our Divine Saviour spoke quite frequently of His pending passion. How touching are His words: "And I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" He tells us that He must suffer, urged by the power of love which He cannot resist. Though the justice of His Father did not demand such immense sufferings, the Son desired to take upon Himself an excess of pain to merit super-abundant graces for us. Accordingly, He suffered in all His senses: in His eyes, when they were forced to see so much that deeply grieved His tender Heart, namely, the depression and desertion of His disciples, and the angry, despicable mien of His enemies; in His ears, when forced to hear the blasphemies, the false testimony and the derision of his enemies. His taste was cruelly tortured by the excessive thirst and the bitter draught of vinegar and gall. He suffered inexpressible pain in His whole Body in the scourging, in the crowning with thorns, and in the crucifixion. His holy Soul, however, endured still greater agony: the dereliction and desolation in Gethsemane and on the cross, the dread of the magnitude of His sufferings, the sorrow on account of the infinite offense against the Divine Majesty, and the loss of so many souls.

Let us contemplate the infinite love of our Saviour, Who endured all these sufferings voluntarily, for the

whole human race, for His friends and His enemies. Thus can everyone say with the Apostle: "He hath loved me and delivered Himself up for me" (Gal. 2, 20). Should we not gladly return His love, by joyfully accepting in a spirit of love all the hardships, all the sacrifices ordinarily inseparable from our holy vocation, to prove our gratitude to our Divine Saviour for His infinite mercies?

Second Point

THE CONTEMPLATION OF THE PASSION OF CHRIST IS VERY PROFITABLE FOR US

The saints call the passion of Christ a wonderful book, opened to the whole world that all may read therein the great mysteries of the justice and love of God. The Lord Himself once revealed this to St. Angela of Foligno: "Whoever wishes to find My grace, should never lose sight of the cross, no matter what may be his frame of mind—be he in joy or in sorrow. Those who earnestly occupy themselves with the contemplation of My passion and death, are in truth My children." At sight of the cross the sinner will be moved to repentance, the lukewarm will be anew inflamed with zeal in the combat of passions and will strive earnestly to acquire virtue; the God-loving soul will attain more intimate union with her Lord and Saviour. From contemplation of the Crucified the saints derived courage to follow Jesus and to walk unflinchingly on the way of the cross; they rejoiced to be nailed to the cross with Christ by means of corporal and spiritual sufferings, till, finally, their dying gaze riveted on the Crucified, they could say with Him: "It is consummated." O my soul, for thee, also, is the book open; thou, too, canst partake of the blessing revealed to St.

Angela at another time: "Be ye blessed by My Father, ye, that have compassion with My sufferings, that share My afflictions, and walk My ways; for thereby ye have merited that your garments be washed in My Precious Blood. Be blessed all ye that compassionate Me in My inexpressible anguish and the death that I have suffered to release you from eternal pangs, to make atonement and pay the ransom for you, that you may be found worthy to share My poverty, My humiliations, My sufferings and distress. Be blessed all ye that faithfully commemorate My passion, this greatest of wounds of all times, the salvation and life of the fallen human race, the sole refuge of sinners, because ye also have part in My resurrection, in My everlasting reign and My honor, which I purchased at the price of My Precious Blood and bitter passion, and for all eternity ye shall be my heirs."

Imbued with these holy sentiments, let us enter with heart and soul upon the contemplation of the passion of Christ. Let us endeavor lovingly to sympathize and to suffer with Him. Let us beg the holy angels, who were present during the passion of our Divine Saviour, and the Blessed Virgin, our dear Mother, to accompany us in spirit on the way to Gethsemane and thence to Golgotha with our Divine Lord. Let us beg them to teach us how to console Jesus, how to impress His bitter passion indelibly on our hearts, to cherish the memory thereof and to derive great profit for the salvation of our soul.

Affections: O my Jesus, Thou didst suffer so much for me, and how little is that which I suffer for Thee! How must I blush for shame when I compare my sufferings with Thine! How could I ponder the excruciating torments which Thou, O Jesus, didst endure for love of me, immolating Thy life and shedding the last

drop of Thy Precious Blood, and not be ready to suffer for Thee, to immolate my heart to Thy service! Should I not even offer my life, if Thou shouldst ask it of me? —Give me then, my beloved Saviour, the grace to seek all my happiness in sharing Thy passion, to impress it deeply on my mind and heart by profound meditation, that I may say with the Apostle: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord, Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6, 14).

Resolution: I will endeavor to contemplate the passion of my Saviour with zeal and tender compassion, and daily ask God for the requisite grace.

Spiritual Bouquet: "My Saviour hath loved me and delivered Himself up for me."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR FRIDAY

AGONY OF JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

"Then Jesus came with them into a country place which is called Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples: 'Sit you here, till I go yonder and pray.' And taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He began to grow sorrowful and to be sad. Then He saith to them: 'My soul is sorrowful even unto death: stay you here, and watch with Me' " (Matt. 26, 36-38).

First Prelude: Behold our Divine Saviour in the Garden of Gethsemane weighed down by sorrow and grief.

Second Prelude: O my Jesus, give me true compunction for my sins, that I may share Thy sorrow and seek consolation with Thee alone.

First Point

THE PROFOUND SORROW AND ANGUISH OF JESUS

A little while ago Jesus had lovingly consoled His Apostles in the Supper Room, had spoken of His passion as the object of His intense desires. Suddenly He yielded to sorrow, fear, and anguish of soul. "My soul is sorrowful unto death," He said to His disciples. How excessive must this sorrow have been if the Eternal Truth spoke thus! We see further that Jesus suffered voluntarily, and that sorrow could assail Him no sooner than He Himself had decreed. What a miracle of love! To behold a God, the essence of eternal happiness, sorrowful for love of mankind!

This sorrow was caused by the sight of the sins for which He willed to atone. Like a tremendous burden, all the crimes, all the sins committed since the Fall weighed down our Blessed Saviour and plunged His soul into inexpressible grief. This sorrow was further intensified by the thought of all the sins of the future. Looking into the future Jesus saw a new torrent of sins breaking in upon Him and flowing on until the end of time. What must have been the sentiments of His sinless, holiest Soul at sight of such abominations! This sorrow alone would have sufficed to cause His death. At the same time it augmented all His corporal sufferings, for it clung to Him until He commended His Soul into the hands of His heavenly Father. Even now the Saviour foresaw the vast ocean of sufferings that awaited Him. He beheld the treason of Judas, the flight of the Apostles, the denial by Peter, felt the inexpressible anguish and pain of the scourging, the excruciating pain of the crowning with thorns, and saw even the cross erected on Calvary.

on which He was to die amid inexpressible anguish. The most bitter suffering of His love-inflamed Heart, however, was the thought that, notwithstanding His sufferings, so many souls would be eternally lost.

Behold your Saviour, O my soul! Contemplate this sorrowful picture and be mindful that your sins, too, were the cause of His agony. Learn here to repent of them, and to accept the sorrow that God suffers to come upon you in punishment of your sins. If the Son of God thus grieved over my sins, what must not I do, who have committed them?

Second Point

BY HIS AGONY IN THE GARDEN, JESUS WILLED TO SANCTIFY OUR SORROW

By divine dispensation we must suffer manifold reverses and tribulations in this life. Sufferings are repugnant to our rebellious, corrupt nature, inasmuch as they produce pain, unrest, and disgust; but by His agony in the Garden, Jesus merited for us the grace to sanctify such dispositions of soul. He wills that in dark hours we look upon Him as our model and unite ourselves with Him, that our sorrow, too, may redound to the honor of God and the salvation of souls! Countless souls have found, in the agonizing Heart of Jesus, the source of all consolation. Contemplating the agonizing Heart of Jesus in Gethsemane, penitents of every rank have, despite the most poignant grief for their sins, experienced profound peace of soul.

Let us then renew our courage, and in all our sufferings seek comfort and relief in the Sacred Heart of Jesus; the more we despise every other form of consolation, the more shall we find it in this Sacred Heart. Let us banish

far from us every sorrow and grief that might endanger the welfare of our soul, such as springs from imperfect motives, from inordinate affections, or from lack of confidence in Divine Providence. Oh, how unlike the sorrow of Jesus is such grief!

Affections: O my Saviour, I thank Thee for the sorrow which Thou didst will to suffer for my sins. Offer it to the heavenly Father in satisfaction for my many transgressions. Let me share Thy anguish by sincere compunction and contrition for all the sins whereby I have grieved Thy infinitely loving Heart. O Heart, plunged in an ocean of bitterness, Thy sorrow is the surest pledge of Thy infinite love. For the future I will no longer seek consolation with creatures. I desire Thy grace and Thy love. Possessing them, I shall desire nothing further.

Resolution: In every affliction I will have recourse to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I will unite my contrition with the sorrow of Jesus in the Garden.

Spiritual Bouquet: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR SATURDAY

THE PRAYER OF JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF OLIVES

"And going a little further, He fell upon His face, praying, and saying: 'My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt' " (Matt. 26, 39).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus prostrate in prayer to His Eternal Father.

Second Prelude: Teach me, O my Divine Saviour, to imitate Thy reverence and Thy interior sentiments in prayer.

First Point

THE WORDS OF JESUS: "MY FATHER, IF IT BE POSSIBLE, LET THIS CHALICE PASS FROM ME"

Jesus, in His intense sadness, falls prostrate on the ground and prays most ardently to His Eternal Father. He desires to be the Victim of propitiation for the sins of men, who ought to cast themselves in profound humility and annihilation before the Divine Majesty. "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me," is the prayer which Jesus in His agony thrice offers to His heavenly Father. Jesus here teaches us how to act in time of suffering. When consolations and human aid fail us, let us have immediate recourse to God in prayer. Nor let us cease, for prayer is the surest means of obtaining relief and consolation. Do not the lives of the Saints give testimony of this? And have not we, ourselves, experienced the wonderful effects of persevering prayer? Let us, therefore, not unburden our hearts to men, and in useless conversations seek human aid and consolation, but let us turn to God and confide in Him. Furthermore, the prayer of our Lord, "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt," gives evidence of Christ's profound humility and reverence, and of His perfect conformity to the Divine Will. That our prayer may be acceptable to God, few words expressive of our love, our faith, our confidence, our abandonment, and compunction, and these often repeated, will suffice. The prayer of Jesus also teaches us that we may ask that the chalice of suffering be removed

from us, for such a prayer far from displeasing God, honors Him. By it we humbly acknowledge our weakness, and place our trust in His infinite mercy. Do I have immediate recourse to God when sufferings come my way? Do I pray with exterior reverence, with interior recollection, humility, and perseverance?

Second Point

THE WORDS OF OUR LORD: "NEVERTHELESS NOT AS I WILL, BUT AS THOU WILT"

After our Divine Saviour had thrice entreated the heavenly Father to remove from Him the chalice of suffering so painful to human nature, he adds: "Nevertheless not as I will but as Thou wilt." What loving and complete abandonment to the heavenly Father! Jesus, being God, knows perfectly the extent and painfulness of His passion in its every detail; but despite the repugnance which His human nature experiences He submits to the Divine Will, and in perfect and loving self-surrender prays: "Father not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Thus the Saviour teaches us to pray, for such a prayer ascends as an acceptable oblation to the throne of God. Nor shall it be unanswered, for although we do not always obtain that for which we petition, yet God in His infinite goodness will grant us what He knows to be for our advantage. God wills that in this life we be subject to misfortunes, temptations, cares, sickness, and anxieties, in order that, as His elect, we may participate in the sufferings and also in the glory of the Saviour. Why is it that man shrinks from suffering? Ah! it is because he fails to recognize in it the merciful designs of a loving

and Divine Providence. Let us strive to recognize in our daily sufferings the loving designs of the good God, and take to heart the counsel of St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi: "When sufferings overtake you, beware, lest you separate them from their origin and source—the Divine Will—and they become an unbearable burden."

Consider, O my soul, whether and to what extent you have been resigned to the Will of God in sufferings and tribulations, and you will know how far you have advanced in perfection.

Affections: O my Jesus, what dost Thou ask of me in return for the great and painful sacrifices Thou hast made to the Eternal Father for my salvation? Ah, Lord, Thou dost desire that I love Thee at all times with a generous and constant love. But do Thou grant me this love in virtue of that ardent prayer which Thou didst offer to Thy heavenly Father for me. I have but one desire, dear Lord, and that is to seek in this life only the accomplishment of Thy Divine Will, for this is the perfection of love. Strengthen me, O my dear Saviour, that I may do Thy holy Will not only in things easy and agreeable, but also in those painful and disagreeable.

Resolution: I will pray in union with my Divine Saviour, in order to obtain strength, lovingly to accomplish His holy Will in all difficulties.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Father not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

Prayer: Our Father . . .

MEDITATION FOR QUADRAGESIMA SUNDAY

JESUS RETIRES INTO THE DESERT AND IS TEMPTED

"Then Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards He was hungry" (Matt. 4, 1-2).

First Prelude: Behold our Divine Saviour in the desert, setting us a striking example of the most rigorous penance, by prayer and fasting.

Second Prelude: O Divine Saviour, teach me, by Thy holy example, how to prepare myself for missions of love and for the combat of temptations.

First Point

JESUS, LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT INTO THE DESERT

Returning from the Jordan after His baptism, Jesus was led by the Holy Ghost into the desert. As Moses had fasted forty days before the Law of the Old Covenant was revealed to him, so Jesus would not announce the New Law of Grace before having fasted in the desert forty days and forty nights. He followed the impulse of the Holy Ghost of Whom it is written: "I will lead her into the wilderness and I will speak to her heart" (Osee 2, 14). We, too, were so fortunate as to hear the voice of the Holy Ghost which drew us into the seclusion of the cloister, where He continues to instruct us in the measure in which we devote ourselves to retirement and interior recollection. This is done, primarily, by the observance of religious silence. Silence draws God into the soul and makes her receptive for the operations of

divine grace. "How gladly would I speak to souls" our Lord once said to St. Teresa, "but many do not hear My voice, because of the noise made by creatures." Does not this complaint of our Saviour apply to us? What progress should we have made in the interior life if we had always lent a vigilant ear to the Holy Spirit, Who rescued us from the dangers of the world and led us along the beautiful paths of perfection! "Hearken," He says to the Spouse, teaching her how to win the love of her heavenly Bridegroom, "hearken, O daughter, and see and incline thy ear" (Ps. 44-11).

It is impossible, however, to hear, to "hearken," without being silent. Let us often look at our Divine Exemplar in the desert. Let us honor His holy silence by caution in the use of our tongue and by recollection of spirit. Let us seek our happiness and peace in the interior of our heart, where He dwells Whose presence amply compensates for the useless intercourse with creatures.

Second Point

JESUS, TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL

Our Lord and Saviour permitted Satan to tempt Him, for the consolation and instruction of His elect. He willed to teach us how to meet temptation. If He, the Holiest of the Holy, permitted the prince of darkness to approach Him in visible form and tempt Him to sensuality, to presumption, even to idolatry, then temptation in itself can be nothing sinful. Is it not expressly said that Jesus, impelled by the Holy Ghost, went into the desert, there to be tempted by Satan? In this world we must be tried by temptation and give God proofs of our fidelity; therefore, we should prepare to meet tempta-

tions, all the more, the higher we have set our goal. Jesus willed to be tempted after His baptism and after having fasted forty days and forty nights, in order to teach us that we are never secure against the onslaughts of the Evil One. While we are enjoying special interior consolations in the seclusion of the cloister, Satan often directs the most violent attacks against us, for he is envious of the grace of God dwelling in our hearts and desires nothing more ardently than to triumph over souls consecrated to God. Therefore does Holy Writ say: "Son, when thou comest to the service of God stand in justice and fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation" (Eccl. 2, 1).

From the manner in which our Lord was tempted, we know that the enemy takes advantage of our situation and seeks to utilize our respective needs. Seeing the Saviour exhausted with hunger and fatigue, he said to Him: "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread" (Matt. 4, 3). Likewise the tempter knows how to avail himself of the variable moods and dispositions of soul, in order to attain His object. Does he notice in souls striving after higher perfection that temptations to sensuality are easily resisted and conquered, then he flatters their pride, their egotism, for he understands quite well that thus he will more readily accomplish his purpose. Let us not fear the tempter, for Jesus, by His victory, has earned superabundant grace for us to ward off victoriously every attack of the Evil One. All his assaults will be but vain attempts, will even afford us opportunities of advancing from virtue to virtue and daily growing stronger in the grace of God.

Affections: I adore Thee, my Jesus, Thou Source of all strength and holiness. I thank Thee that Thou dost

teach me by Thy holy example to prepare myself by prayer and mortification for the combat of temptations. Give me the grace to keep my soul through silence, that in accordance with the words of the prophet, I may find my strength and courage in silence. May this time of penance be for us all a time of grace and salvation. May we curb our evil inclinations by abstinence and renunciation, direct our mind towards God and zealously strive to acquire virtue. Be Thou, Divine Saviour, our strength and support, that through Thee we may achieve the victory over all our enemies.

Resolutions: I will practice those mortifications, in particular, which are most conducive to my advancement in perfection.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Behold, now is the time of grace; now are the days of salvation.

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR MONDAY

JESUS, IN HIS AGONY, IS STRENGTHENED BY AN ANGEL

"And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him. And being in agony He prayed the longer. And His sweat became as drops of Blood, trickling down upon the ground" (Luke 22, 43-44).

First Prelude: In spirit enter the Garden of Gethsemane and remain near our Saviour, sorrowful even unto death, accepting consolation and strength from an angel.

Second Prelude: O my Saviour, give me a great love of Thee, that it may strengthen me to endure every combat and to make every sacrifice for Thee.

First Point

JESUS SWEATS BLOOD

At no moment of man's life does his weakness manifest itself so visibly as in the hour of death, when he is forsaken by all and when naught but confidence in the merits of the Saviour can afford him consolation.

To merit an abundance of graces for that hour, our beloved Saviour designed to endure such a bitter agony. His death should be the model and support of ours. Let us adore our Blessed Saviour Who, as St. Bernard expresses it, shed bloody tears with His whole Body. Let us thank Him for submitting to such unheard of torments to merit for us the grace of a happy death, and consolation and strength in our last agony. Let us promise to remain faithful to Him in the future, daily to resume the struggle with the evil spirit and our passions, and with the assistance of His grace, to achieve a glorious victory. Looking upon our Divine Exemplar, should we not consider all that we suffer for love of Him light and insignificant? St. Paul said: "We have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin" (Heb. 12, 4). The more we have to struggle during life, the more accomplished and valiant shall we be found in our last combat, to resist the assaults of the enemy.

We will frequently kneel in spirit beside our Saviour, sweating blood, and declare ourselves ready for every struggle. We will not only accept death at His hands with all its circumstances but also all the hours of Gethsemane, all the anxieties and sufferings, whereby the heavenly Bridegroom would chasten the love of His spouses. Let us unite our agony and the cold sweat of death with the precious drops of Blood that ooze from every pore

of His Sacred Body, and in union with Him, resign ourselves to the Will of our heavenly Father.

Second Point

JESUS IS STRENGTHENED BY AN ANGEL

Must it not fill us with admiration and astonishment to see a God, Who supports the world on His hands and preserves all things, accept consolation and strength from His creature! What a profound abasement for the Saviour of the world! As in all the mysteries of the passion, so also here, He would again teach us that man, who abandoned God through pride, can return to Him only through humility. In His infinite love and condescension, Jesus willed to assume all the weakness of human nature, and as He subjected Himself to the profoundest grief, through love, He would also receive encouragement and comfort for our sake. What consolation in this thought! If He, our Mediator and Head, accepted succor and encouragement from an angel, we, His members, have the right to expect equal succor in our needs and sufferings. God wills that angels should be the ministers of His goodness and mercy, and He has given them charge over us. When Jesus accepted succor from an angel, it was not that His sufferings might be diminished, but to enable Him to suffer more and greater torments, since through love for His heavenly Father and for us, His holy soul thirsted for an excess of suffering. Likewise, God occasionally grants us consolation and strength in prayer, that we may face reverses with renewed courage and strength, and shoulder them willingly for the honor of God, the salvation of our neighbor, and our own sanc-

tification. But while we experience the assistance of the angels in our sufferings we should be consoling angels of mercy for all who in any way come under our influence, and instruments of the love of Jesus; thus we shall tender the sweetest consolation to the Sacred, Agonizing Heart of Jesus.

Dare I presume that my zeal, my love and fidelity in His service were a source of comfort to my dear Saviour during His agony in the Garden?

Affections: O my most amiable Jesus! Thou strength and glory of all the angels condescendest to be consoled and refreshed by Thy creature. O marvelous mystery, which reveals to me the depth of Thy humility! Thy infinite mercy will not refuse grace and encouragement to me in afflictions in answer to my trustful prayer. Not only wilt Thou send me an angel, but Thou Thyself, most lovable Savior, wilt be my strength and my consolation. Thy bloody sweat is the wonderful balm that infuses invincible courage into my heart. Oh, let me in spirit remain near Thee to dry Thy bloody sweat. O Jesus! grant that by my love and my fervor I may console Thee and thus prove my gratitude to Thee for Thy infinite love.

Resolution: I will seek to console my sorrowing Jesus in a particular manner to-day, by fervor in prayer and patient forbearance with others.

Spiritual Bouquet: "And there appeared to Him an angel strengthening Him."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR TUESDAY

JESUS ADMONISHES HIS DISCIPLES AND GOES TO MEET HIS ENEMIES

"And He cometh to His Disciples and findeth them asleep. And He saith to Peter: 'What? Could you not watch one hour with me? Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Again the second time He went and prayed saying: 'My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, Thy will be done.' And He cometh to His disciples and saith to them: 'Sleep ye now and take your rest; behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners" (Matt. 26, 40-45).

First Prelude: Imagine Jesus full of sorrow and grief coming to His Apostles, whom He finds asleep; and hear Him mildly reproaching them.

Second Prelude: Grant me the grace, O Jesus, in fervent meditation to prepare myself for the daily struggles and difficulties that I may meet them courageously.

First Point

THE CHARITABLE INDULGENCE OF JESUS TOWARD HIS DISCIPLES

In the dark hours of Gethsemane Jesus did not forget His Apostles. He had taken them along, that having witnessed His transfiguration on Mt. Thabor, they should also be witnesses of His passion. Sad to say, they had not followed His admonitions to watch with Him and pray, for when Jesus returned He found them sleeping.

Then He turned to Peter and said: "Could you not watch one hour with Me?" How embarrassing for the Apostles that, despite the admonition and exhortation of their Master, they had yielded to sleep! What a source of confusion was the reproach for Peter, reminding him of his weakness! He had but shortly, with absolute self-confidence, affirmed his fidelity and constancy! Do we not frequently deserve the reproach "Not one hour could you watch with Me"? We yield to distractions, to sloth, to drowsiness, especially during the precious moments of meditation when we ought to forestall the occasions and temptations of the day and arm ourselves against them by begging God for His special help.

Little wonder, then, that we so easily break our resolutions and grow disheartened! Alas, how often do we resemble the disciples by our carelessness and lack of solicitude! Surely our love for Jesus cannot but be slight and cold. Though we have received special graces and are so close to Him, we refuse to watch and pray, in intimate union with Him. Twice He finds His disciples sleeping, and still He remains calm, compassionates their weakness and utters no rebuke.

Oh, how good and amiable is the loving Heart of our Saviour! We may always turn to Him with confidence, even though we have been unfaithful to grace. He knows our misery and knows, too, that the spirit is willing but the flesh, weak. Let us often bestow upon our neighbor the marks of affection that we receive from Jesus. In associating with our fellow religious and the children entrusted to our keeping we will imitate the meekness of Jesus, and if their repeated faults and weaknesses become irksome, we will in all humility recall our own fickleness and inconstancy.

Second Point

THE DETERMINATION WITH WHICH JESUS EMBRACES SUFFERING

Having strengthened Himself by persevering prayer, Jesus said to His apostles, "Arise, let us go." The fear, the anxiety, which His Humanity willed to suffer for us gave place to a magnanimous determination. How differently do we act! Like the disciples, we, too, display heroic courage and make great promises before the danger, but no sooner do we encounter it, than our courage deserts us and we prove weak and cowardly. This is due, no doubt, to the fact that we are not fervent and persevering in prayer, and therefore fail to experience its salutary effects. St. Gregory says, "Man must acquire by prayer what God from all eternity has decreed to give him." If we have been sluggish and indolent in prayer, dare we feign surprise at our lack of courage?

The saints, who after the example of their Divine Master and Model, prayed so fervently, so perseveringly, could truly say in the hour of trials and sufferings, of martyrdom and death, "The hour has come, let us go." Yes, they longed to die with their Divine Master. Like unto Him, they had the most ardent desire to suffer and die. "I desired to be dissolved," said the Apostle of the Gentiles. "To suffer or to die," St. Teresa cried out. St. Magdalen of Pazzi desired to live longer that she might suffer the longer. It is true that God has not called everyone to such an exalted degree of sanctity, but all, without exception, must strive zealously to bear with humility, confidence, filial trust and resignation the trials and hardships that God in His goodness imposes upon them. Let us "Look on Jesus, Who having joy set before

Him endured the cross," and in anticipation of the pending difficulties and trials let us say, "The hour has come; arise, let us go!"

Affections: O sorrowful Heart of Jesus! Nowhere dost Thou find consolation! Even Thy best friends are without sympathy and cannot watch one hour with Thee! Alas, how often have I been guilty of a like indifference and slothfulness! How often have I felt that the spirit is willing, but the flesh weak and inconstant! Oh my Jesus, rouse me from the slumber of insensibility by Thy enlivening grace: enkindle the fire of love in my heart and give me courage and a holy determination to follow Thee on the way of suffering and humiliations, that I may be among those faithful souls who have persevered with Thee to the end in sufferings and afflictions.

Resolution: In fervent meditation I will seek the courage and determination necessary to bear whatever is disagreeable in the faithful discharge of my duties.

Spiritual Bouquet: "The hour has come; arise, let us go."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR WEDNESDAY

JESUS IS BETRAYED BY JUDAS WITH A KISS

"As He yet spoke, behold Judas, one of the twelve, came and with him a great multitude with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the ancients of the people. And he that betrayed Him gave them a sign, saying: "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is He, hold Him fast! And forthwith coming to Jesus, he said: 'Hail Rabbi.' And he kissed Him. And Jesus said to him:

'Friend, whereto art thou come?' Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus, and held Him" (Matt. 26, 47-50).

First Prelude: In spirit enter the Garden; behold Jesus advancing to meet His traitor, and hear His loving words.

Second Prelude: Ask the grace to be preserved from grave faults by a conscientious fidelity in little things.

First Point

THE MEEKNESS AND COMPASSION OF JESUS WITH THE TRAITOR

The treason of Judas must have constituted one of the keenest sufferings of the Sacred Heart of Jesus! When our Divine Saviour called Judas to the apostolate, He foresaw his future betrayal, and still He took him into His confidence, instructed and trained him for the preaching of the gospel. Jesus had manifested towards Judas a special confidence by giving the alms into his custody. He had often and impressively warned and admonished him lovingly. At the Last Supper, when in his blindness Judas asked our Divine Saviour with the rest of the Apostles, whether it was he that would betray Him, Jesus told him plainly that it was he. Judas could no longer doubt that Jesus knew of his wicked design and that He desired to stay the horrible crime and save him. When a few hours later the traitor, approaching the Saviour in company with the ruffians, said "Hail Rabboni!" and kissed Him, the Lord did not disdain to receive the treacherous kiss, but with indescribable mildness and sweetness said: "Friend, whereto art thou come?"

What an insult, what a horrible torture for the Saviour's heart was this kiss of the traitor! A disciple

abuses the token of friendship to deliver His Master into the hands of His enemies! With the Psalmist the Lord laments: "For if my enemy had reviled Me!" (Psalm 54, 13). But the disciple delivers his Master, the friend faithlessly betrays his Friend, Who took him into His confidence, man delivers up his God. Once more the Saviour invites Judas to His friendship by calling him "Friend," but how must the abuse of graces have hardened the traitor's heart!

The love of Jesus for His faithless disciple is a figure of His love for the greatest sinners. He calls them to repentance and loves them, despite their sinfulness and malice, and if His grace finds a receptive heart, it transforms the greatest sinner into a holy penitent. We, too, will place unbounded confidence in the tender mercies of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to whom but one thing is impossible, namely, not to compassionate the misery of those who are of good will. Does grace always find my heart receptive? What hindrances must I remove?

Second Point

WHAT DOES THE APPALLING EXAMPLE OF JUDAS TEACH US?

It seems incomprehensible that Judas could develop into so vile a monster of ingratitude and wickedness, as to perpetrate so black a deed, and accomplish his plan with such detestable hypocrisy—"Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is He; hold Him fast!" Thus, in his delusion, he had cautioned the soldiers. How deep a fall for an Apostle, for one called to be a pillar of the Church! Must this example not inspire us with a wholesome fear, and induce us to be on our guard? Judas began by being unfaithful

in trifles, for the way that led him to his terrible fall is the ordinary way to perdition, namely, lack of fidelity in small matters.

He was, as the evangelist tells us, a thief. His predominant passion, therefore, was love of money and greed of temporal gain. Had Judas entered into himself after his first fall, had he acknowledged his guilt to his Master, he should certainly not have fallen so low. But Judas more and more abused the grace offered him. He heard the sublime discourses of Jesus; heard His awful woe upon those attached to the things of this world; heard Him promise His Apostles, that having left all things they should one day sit on twelve thrones to judge the tribes of Israel. But all this made no impression on him and effected no amendment of his life. The evil spirit gained more and more power over him, and persuaded him, finally to betray his Master.

Oh, how many have fallen in consequence of a single unrestrained evil inclination! How many have forfeited the friendship and love of Jesus for a paltry price, thus wounding the Heart of the Saviour the more keenly, the more graces He had lavished upon them! Oh, that we would guard most carefully against the slightest fault! That we would treasure above all else the love of Jesus, and sacrifice all, relinquish all, to obtain it, and to preserve this priceless treasure.

Affections: O Heart of my Jesus, Abyss of Mercy and Love! I, too, am among those ungrateful souls that have requited Thy love with insults. My heart is filled with confusion and sorrow, when I consider Thy infinite goodness to me, despite my ingratitude. O God of Love, tear me away from earthly inclinations, which would sever me from my highest Good. Reign Thou, alone, in my

heart and possess it wholly. Give me Thy grace and Thy love, O my God, for with it I am rich enough and desire no more.

Resolution: In every trial and affliction, I will seek encouragement in the thought that at such a price I can purchase the love of Jesus.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Friend, whereto art thou come?"

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR THURSDAY

JESUS IS CAPTURED

"Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth and said to them: 'Whom seek ye?' " (John 18, 4).

First Prelude: Imagine you see the soldiers falling prostrate at the words of Jesus: "I am He!"

Second Prelude: O Jesus, let me understand the power and love of Thy Sacred Heart, that I may place all my confidence in Thee and for love of Thee be solicitous for the good of others.

First Point

THE POWER OF JESUS OVER HIS ENEMIES

Having addressed words of incomprehensible love to His faithless disciple, our Lord asked the servants: "Whom seek ye?" They answered: "Jesus of Nazareth." "I am He," the Saviour replied. There was needed but this one word from the lips of the Eternal Wisdom, exhausted unto death, to hurl the entire armed band to the ground. Oh, adore the powerful, almighty

God Whom no one can resist, to Whom all power is given and before Whom every knee bends in heaven, on earth and under the earth. We must, however, be on our guard so as never to rise up against Him or even to resist Him in the smallest things. Let us promise Him unswerving fidelity, in those things, especially, that require self-denial. Let us beg Jesus to cast all His enemies to the ground. May He cast all sinners to the ground and fill them with a wholesome fear, that they may be converted. May He prostrate all His enemies in our hearts: pride, sensuality, self-will, sloth, and tepidity. If He is with us, who can then be against us? He, Who with one word can annihilate His enemies, will always be our help and our support. Should we not, therefore, conceive ever greater confidence in Him and in every danger take refuge in His Sacred Heart? If we endeavor lovingly to seek Him by fervent prayer, incessant mortification, complete renunciation, humble, contrite reparation, we shall find pardon, grace, mercy, love, peace, the salvation of our souls and eternal happiness.

Am I attentive to the voice of Jesus at prayer? Am I mindful that I am conversing with the Most High? When He admonishes me in the course of the day do I realize that He is asking this or that sacrifice of me, connected with the discharge of my duties?

Second Point

JESUS PROVIDES LOVINGLY FOR HIS DISCIPLES

Like a loving father, Jesus is concerned for the security of His disciples.—"If therefore you seek me," Jesus said to the troop of soldiers, "let these go their way." Oh, the admirable love of Jesus! These words

implied a command forbidding His enemies to harm His Apostles and at the same time depriving them of the power to do so because their hour had not yet come. Himself, Jesus delivered into the hands of these monsters, to be brutally subjected to all manner of abuses and ridicule, to the scourging and the crowning with thorns, even to the death of the cross—but His own He protects with a powerful hand and suffers not a hair of their head to be touched. What a comforting assurance! Nothing can happen to us without the Will of God—no harm can befall us, nor sufferings smite us, before the hour appointed by the Divine Wisdom. Should we not, therefore, throw off all anxiety about the future and surrender ourselves with filial trust to God's ever-wise and loving Providence?

In daily intercourse with others, especially those entrusted to our care, we must strive to imitate the touching love and solicitude of our Divine Lord by choosing for ourselves the most difficult task. Doing this we shall be able to support others in their trials, to bear the burden and discomfort ourselves, in order to lighten the labors of others. Our Blessed Lord has entrusted to us the children, the poor, and the sick, that we might sacrifice ourselves for them, thus loving them as He has loved us. How little should we co-operate with our holy vocation, were we to live on in selfishness, in ease and comfort, and allow others to suffer! How could Jesus, then recognize us as His spouses?

Do I not occasionally seek to evade difficulties in order to impose them on my neighbor? Am I faithful in the discharge of my duties towards those entrusted to my care, even at the price of a great personal sacrifice.

Affections: O my beloved Jesus, let me hear the sweet

words: "I am thy Saviour and thy God, thy strength and thy hope, thy joy and thy life." I will confide in Thee alone, and in all difficulties have recourse to Thee. O most amiable Jesus, how immeasurable is Thy love toward all whom the Father has given Thee, how tender Thy solicitude for them even in Thy passion! Thou dost permit Thy enemies to rave against Thee, but not to touch Thy friends. Thou endurest all manner of abuses to spare Thy elect. Oh, that I would manifest my gratitude for such love by bestowing a tender solicitude upon my fellow religious and the children committed to my care. I will cheerfully embrace hardships and labors to lighten their burdens.

Resolution: I will lovingly bear with the defects and weaknesses of others, will encourage and support them in their difficulties and sufferings.

Spiritual Bouquet: "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR FRIDAY

THE ZEAL OF PETER IN DEFENDING JESUS

"Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And the name of the servant was Malchus. Jesus therefore said to Peter: "Put up thy sword into the scabbard. The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?' " (John 18, 10-11.)

First Prelude: Remain in the Garden of Olives near our Divine Saviour, and see Peter drawing his sword to strike the servant of the high priest.

Second Prelude: Give me grace to understand, O my beloved Saviour, that only through humility and meekness shall I be able to glorify Thee and achieve the victory over my enemies.

First Point

THE IMPETUOSITY AND INDISCREET ZEAL OF THE APOSTLES

Having witnessed how Jesus with one word threw the soldiers to the ground, the Apostles took courage and addressed Jesus, saying to Him: "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" (Luke 22, 49). Simon Peter without waiting for an answer, drew his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high-priest. He suffered himself to be carried away by the impetuosity of native zeal, without thought of the prophecy of Jesus, that He must go to Jerusalem to die on the cross. Had Peter consulted his faith, of which on a former occasion he had given such a splendid testimony, he would readily have recognized that "Christ the Son of the living God" needed no earthly defense. How often has not our zeal been indiscreet and unjust! Let us learn from the example of Jesus to employ only the weapons of patience, of meekness and silence against our adversary. They have ever been the favorite weapons of Holy Church by means of which she will achieve the victory over the gates of hell until the end of time. They constitute her honor and renown, and are the distinguishing trait of her disciples.

How often in the course of the day can we prove ourselves true children of Holy Church and in union with her achieve the most glorious victories! How often can we check our tongue, which St. James calls a "world of iniquity" (James v, 6), how often crush our inordinate

desires, smother our sensitiveness, requite a slight insult with a service of charity! This is truly fulfilling the wish of the Saviour, to "put the sword into the scabbard" and to gain the victory by vanquishing self and subjugating perverse nature.

Second Point

"SHOULD I NOT DRINK THE CHALICE THAT THE FATHER HATH GIVEN ME?"

With these words Jesus reprimanded Peter for his indiscreet zeal, and reminded him that the Will of the heavenly Father must be accomplished. He was, as He Himself assured us, "come from heaven to do the will of Him Who had sent Him." Thus Jesus teaches us by word and example, especially in His holy passion, that perfect love consists in the complete abandonment of our will to God. Such love requires constant self-denial, and it is the chalice that we, too, must drink. The trials and difficulties of our holy calling, the privations, the poverty, the renunciations, which obedience imposes upon us, the incessant crucifying of the old man, comprise sacrifices repugnant to nature. In all these difficulties, we will say with Jesus: "Should I not drink the chalice that the Father hath sent me?" Looking on the chalice that Jesus emptied to the very dregs, for love of us, we shall find that He Himself drank the most bitter portion and left for us only a very small measure. If we accept it lovingly, it will afford us that sweet peace that far surpasses all consolations of the world. Let us thank our Divine Saviour for having so generously accepted the chalice of suffering and thereby merited for us the grace to be preserved from the bitterness of the cup of sin. In all reverses and tribulations we will say: "I will take the chalice of salvation,

and I will call upon the name of the Lord" (Psalm 115, 4).

Have we accepted sufferings magnanimously, or have we aggravated our little sacrifices by sensitiveness and complaints?

Affections: O most loving Father, behold, I offer myself willingly to accept every chalice that Thy love shall offer me, no matter how bitter the draught. Thy infinite Wisdom and loving Providence have prepared this cup which is so beneficial to my soul, and only in such portions as my weakness can bear. Give me the grace, O my Saviour, to subjugate perverse nature, to subdue my impatience and precipitation by meekness and forbearance. Annihilate self-love in my heart and give me the great grace of Thy holy love. Loving Thee, O Jesus, with my whole heart, I will also love my neighbor. I will rejoice, in being able to prove my gratitude to Thee by total abandonment to Thy divine pleasure and self immolation in Thy service.

Resolution: For the love of Jesus, and in union with Him I will bear willingly whatever is disagreeable or painful to nature.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Should I not drink the chalice that My Father hath sent Me?"

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR SATURDAY

JESUS SURRENDERS HIMSELF INTO THE HANDS OF HIS ENEMIES AND IS DESERTED BY HIS APOSTLES

"In that same hour Jesus said to the multitudes: 'You are come out as it were to a robber with swords and clubs

to apprehend Me, I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you laid not hands on Me.' Now all this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then the disciples all leaving Him, fled" (Matt. 28, 55).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus, the innocent Lamb of God, lovingly addressing His bitter enemies, while the disciples full of fear, take to flight.

Second Prelude: O my Jesus, grant me grace to realize Thy immense love and my utter weakness and inconstancy, that I may cling more closely to Thee.

First Point

THE CONDUCT OF JESUS TOWARD HIS ENEMIES

To repair in some measure the rash act of Peter in cutting off the ear of Malchus, Jesus, in the most touching manner, healed it. This was our Blessed Lord's final attempt to rouse the latent faith of His enemies! What goodness and love! At the same time He rebuked them severely! "When I was daily with you in the temple, you did not stretch forth your hands against Me; but this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22, 53). The hour of His capture, Jesus terms their hour, in which they become instruments of Satan, to whom they surrendered themselves by neglecting to profit by the visitations of the Lord.

What lamentable power does Satan exercise over the hearts of so many who no longer heed divine inspirations, or the counsels and admonitions of their superiors! They are forced into his servitude, become ever more blinded and finally sink into utter darkness. Oh, that our infidelities may not extinguish the light of the Holy Ghost in our hearts and plunge us into total spiritual blindness! Such

a condition should not only frustrate the holiest designs of our Blessed Lord in our regard, but redound to the ruin of countless souls. Oh, the incomprehensible love of our dear Lord for His bitter enemies! His compassion will not relent, nor tire of continually lavishing new favors upon His enemies, that at least in the near future, after His resurrection, they may open their hearts to the light of faith.

Have we made proper use of the many opportunities for doing good to others, by a well-meant reproof, a heartfelt word of advice or admonition? What a source of consolation will it be in the hour of death to be able to say: I have labored for the salvation of souls inasmuch as my weakness permitted it, and God has blessed my feeble efforts. May not one of us ever be deserving of the reproach of having scandalized others, perhaps, our fellow-religious, the sick, or the souls entrusted to our care, by lack of humility and forbearance.

Do I justly esteem my exalted vocation and the power it gives me for good? Am I a fit instrument of God's mercy and charity, or have I suffered the Evil One to use me at will for the accomplishing of his sinister plans?

Second Point

THE FLIGHT OF THE APOSTLES

Though our Blessed Lord had repeatedly warned His Apostles and foretold their future cowardice, they would not be convinced of their utter weakness and instability, nor of the possibility of their base desertion of so beloved a Master. Forgetting that without God's grace they could not remain faithful, they lacked humility, the indispensable weapon of the soldier of Christ. "He that

thinketh Himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall" (St. Paul, I Cor. 10, 12). They having so shamefully deserted their Lord and Master, must not all foolish self-deception and vain self-confidence have deserted them? Must they not have learned from their own weakness to compassionate the weaknesses of others? Thus God knows how to draw good from evil and to incite His elect by contrition and by humility to a more fervent practice of virtue.

Jesus desired to endure such bitter torments for the further reason that He might prove to us the extent of His love and afford us comfort and consolation in kindred sorrows. Full of grief at the thought of His pending passion, He had said to them sorrowfully, "All you shall be scandalized in Me this night. For it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be dispersed" (Matt. 26, 31). Were not here verified the words of the prophet: "In thy sight are all they that afflicted me; my heart hath expected reproach and misery. And I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none; and for one that would comfort me, and I found none"? (Ps. 68, 21). Jesus wished to atone for the faithlessness of men, and at the same time admonish us not to put our trust in creatures.

How often have we fled from our Blessed Saviour, even if there was no question of suffering death with Him, but merely of making a little sacrifice for love of Him!

Affections: O my beloved Saviour, I compassionate Thee in Thy intense sorrow, for the infidelity of Thy disciples, but more do I grieve over my many sins and weaknesses. I know full well that I have deserved to be forsaken by Thee. I pray Thee by the infinite mercy shown Thy bitter enemies, when Thou didst offer them

the grace of conversion by Thy loving words, keep me in Thy grace, in Thy love and friendship. Be Thou, O Jesus, my strength, my support, my light, my hope and my model, that I may courageously conquer all obstacles and all things may redound to my salvation.

Resolution: The thought of my former transgressions shall be an incentive to greater zeal.

Spiritual Bouquet: I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD ON MT. THABOR

"And after six days, Jesus taketh unto Him Peter and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart! And He was transfigured before them. And His Face shone as the sun; and His garments became white as snow. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with Him. And Peter answering said to Jesus: 'Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias' " (Matt. 17, 1-5).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus on Mount Thabor, in the splendor of His glory, attended by Moses and Elias.

Second Prelude: O my beloved Saviour, grant that the contemplation of Thy exalted and mysterious Transfiguration may strengthen my faith, increase my hope and inflame anew my love for Thee.

First Point

CONSIDER THE PERSONS

Picture our Divine Saviour in His glory on Mt. Thabor; His countenance, radiant as the sun; His garments, white as snow. With what joy and admiration this sight should fill us! Let us fall on our knees to adore Him, the King of Eternal Glory, the Sun of Justice, the Splendor of Everlasting Light. Oh, the abysmal love of His Divine Heart that urged Him to renounce this transcendent glory during His earthly career, in order to embrace for our sake humiliation, suffering and death. Let us try to realize what His love has done for us and to make some return for His divine unselfishness. Perhaps we envy the Apostles, so fortunate as to behold the Saviour in His glory. And yet, we, too, shall see the Saviour in heavenly splendor, if we are faithful to His love. His glory shall be ours, indeed; but our virtue must be the purchase price. The memory of the Transfiguration was to be, for the Apostles, a light in the darkness of Gethsemane and a solace in the desolation of Calvary.

Let us, next, contemplate Moses and Elias, who give testimony of Jesus. They, also, appear in glory, flooded with the divine effulgence. From this we may draw the lesson that we shall share in the Saviour's glory the more, the closer we come to Him by the practice of virtue. Moreover, Moses and Elias talk with Christ about His approaching passion and death at Jerusalem. Even in the midst of His Transfiguration, Jesus is occupied with the mystery of mercy, the redemption, and speaks of it to His friends.

Alas, why do we, the objects of this absorbing love and the partakers of all its glorious fruits, think so rarely

of it and speak of it so seldom! In accordance with the wish of Holy Mother Church, let this glance at Thabor encourage us to follow with sympathy our Divine Bridegroom treading the bitter path to Calvary, to the consummation of the Sacrifice on the Cross. Let us seek through this meditation to fortify ourselves for the daily sacrifices that the faithful imitation of Christ demands.

Second Point

CONSIDER THE WORDS

How great, indeed, must have been the wonder, the fear, the joy of the Apostles, who saw with corporeal eyes the Divinity glorifying the sacred Humanity, and beheld the prophets of old, Moses and Elias. Peter at once gave vent to his feelings, saying: "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles: one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." Utterly forgetting that earth is not a place of enjoyment, the Apostle would build tabernacles on Thabor and always remain there. Many souls resemble him in this that while striving for perfection, they would continually enjoy spiritual delights. If things go on according to their taste, then they say: "Lord, it is good to be here," this is true life. Does not self-love frequently conceal itself beneath the garb of piety? Like Peter, we know not what we say, when we seek sensible gratifications, while refusing to carry the cross of Christ. Should we not rather strive for the strong love that seeks not the consolations of God, but the God of consolations? Scarcely had Peter voiced his desire, than a bright cloud overshadowed Christ and a voice from heaven was heard saying: "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him." With these words, the heavenly Father manifested His

Will that we should obey Jesus, believe His teaching, observe His command, and follow His holy example.

What a source of consolation to know that we are disciples of so great a Teacher and Master, Whose mission was thus solemnly announced! Let us, then, heed Him willingly when He tells us that we must deny ourselves, conquer our passions, use violence and crucify ourselves. Let us, further, heed Him when He teaches us yet more effectively still, by His example, to be meek and humble of heart. Finally, let us heed Him when in most intimate communion He admonishes us to lead better lives. Blessed are they that hear Jesus and generously follow His admonitions!

Am I intent upon making my heart receptive for His holy inspirations by means of silence and recollection?

Affections: O my glorified, transfigured Saviour! In profoundest humility prostrate before Thy Divine Majesty, I adore Thee with the disciples who were so fortunate as to behold the splendor of Thy glory. Thou didst will to show us the splendor of Thy Transfiguration in this earthly exile to animate our courage, to enliven our hope, because the glory of the Head shall one day pass over upon the faithful members. Thou dost conceal Thy glory in the Sacrament of Thy Love, to be our food and to implant the germ of immortality into our corruptible bodies. In Thy kingdom Thou wilt reveal Thyself to us entirely to be our salvation and bliss. Oh, give us all the grace to love Thee with our whole heart, to desire and listen to Thee alone, to remain united with Thee in the most faithful imitation of Thy example.

Resolution: I will frequently ponder the glory of my transfigured Saviour that it may incite me to love and imitation of Him.

Spiritual Bouquet: "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR MONDAY

JESUS IS APPREHENDED AND BOUND

"Then the band and the tribune, and the servants of the Jews, took Jesus and bound Him" (John 18, 12).

First Prelude: In spirit see the troop of soldiers seizing Jesus, the gentle Lamb of God, and binding Him like a criminal.

Second Prelude: Through Thy sacred bonds, O Jesus, deliver my soul from the fetters of sin, and unite me to Thee through the bonds of charity.

First Point

THE FETTERS OF JESUS ARE HUMILIATING AND PAINFUL

As though he were a criminal, the Son of God, the Holy One, is cruelly bound by the soldiers. With an air of vicious triumph, with blasphemies and revilings, these base ruffians vent their rage on Him Who without resistance offers them His Hands to be bound. But Jesus longs for still greater sufferings, and because of His desire for the cross, permits them, amidst blows and insults to drag Him from Gethsemane to Jerusalem.

Of what avail would be the bonds with which the brutal mob bind the God-Man, were it not that in the excess of His infinite love, He wills to surrender Himself

into their hands! Oh, the power of Divine Love that holds captive the Son of God! Well may the angels with inexpressible sorrow contemplate Jesus, at the mercy of the blood-thirsty rabble—Jesus, Whose birth they had announced with hymns of jubilee, and unto Whom they had ministered in the desert.

The fetters that bind the Son of God are not only humiliating, but exceedingly painful. For, although He offers no resistance, the brutal soldiers bind their innocent Victim very securely, and then, heaping insults and abuse upon Him, inhumanly drag Him from the Garden to the Judgment Hall. Such treatment does the Innocent, the Benign, the Holy One, receive at the hands of the most vile and hostile rabble.

Let us compassionate our Blessed Saviour, the joy of angels, thus shamefully abused for love of us, and promise reparation for the outrages heaped upon Him, by patiently bearing for love of Him, the ingratitude with which others may requite our services. Could our sufferings be more painful or more humiliating than those of the Son of God in this mystery? Oh, that love of God would hold us, too, captive and strengthen us to suffer patiently in union with Him the little trials and hardships ordinarily inseparable from the faithful discharge of our duties.

Second Point

WHY DID JESUS WILL TO BE BOUND?

To deliver us from the slavery of sin, and by His infinite merits to restore us to the blessed liberty of the children of God, our merciful Saviour takes upon Himself our entire guilt, and suffers Himself to be bound like a

criminal. How many sinners, are, in virtue of these sacred bonds, freed from the fetters of the Evil One, and restored to the love and friendship of God! Through His bonds, Jesus, furthermore, merits for all His disciples the grace to endure courageously and for love of Him, imprisonment and torture. How many, in truth, deem themselves happy with St. Paul, to be "prisoners with Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1), and to suffer for the Name of Jesus! In particular, our Blessed Saviour merits for us the grace generously to renounce self-will, and to submit cheerfully to the dictates of our Holy Rule. How blessed, how glorious it is to be thus fettered for the love of God! Happy, indeed, the soul held captive by the bonds of Divine Love! How foolish and exceedingly culpable we should be, were we to neglect to work at our perfection, the one duty incumbent upon us by our holy vocation! Let us then bridle our tongue, our imagination, our passions, and our senses; let us be fervent in prayer, and conscientious in the discharge of our duties.

Am I the happy victim of charity, or am I still the base slave of my evil propensities—pride, levity and dissipation?

Affections: O my beloved Saviour, animated by the tenderest love and gratitude, I kiss the cords with which Thou art bound for love of me, in order to atone for my pride, my impatience, my indifference. Sweet Jesus, how often have I, by resisting Thy loving inspirations, bound Thy sacred Hands, hindering Thee from imparting to me generously the treasures of Thy divine mercy and grace! O my Jesus, bind me so close to Thee with the sweet bonds of Thy love, that nothing in life or in death may ever sever me from Thee.

Resolution: I will acquit myself with great fidelity

of the sacred obligations imposed upon me by my holy vows and our Holy Rule.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Thy bonds, O Lord, are the bonds of my salvation."

Prayer: O Jesus living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR TUESDAY

JESUS BEFORE ANNAS AND CAIPHAS

"And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was father-in-law to Caiphas, who was the high-priest of that year" (John 18, 13).

First Prelude: Imagine Jesus, bound like a criminal and dragged by the soldiers through the streets of Jerusalem to the house of Caiphas.

Second Prelude: I pray Thee, O my Jesus, by the inexpressible contempt and the ill-treatment Thou didst suffer for love of me, give me fortitude and patience in all reverses.

First Point

WHAT JESUS SUFFERED ON THE WAY TO ANNAS

For three hours Jesus had persevered in prayer and combat in the Garden of Olives. His agony, as well as the treason of Judas and the flight of the Apostles, had exhausted Him completely. Now these vile wretches dragged Him amidst scorn and contempt with violence and impetuosity through the streets of Jerusalem to the house of Annas. What may the Sacred Heart have felt, when they approached this city where a few days before

He had been received with jubilation and rejoicing! He had to see how the people, beholding Him in such a pitiable condition, should be brought to waver in their faith and prejudiced against Him. They had cheerfully accepted His sacred doctrine, for a time, because of His many wonders; now, in the hour of temptation, the majority deserted and abandoned Him. There were yet souls who in the depths of their heart believed in Him; many, too, loved and compassionated Him, but they lacked the courage to espouse His cause openly.

Let us try to feel these pains with our Divine Saviour, and magnify Him for His admirable courage in suffering Himself to be led to slaughter like a lamb, without opening His mouth. And all this He has done for me! Should we not thank Him with our whole heart for such inexpressible love, and show our appreciation by imitation of His patience and composure? We often have occasion in our holy vocation to tread in His footsteps, when in the interest of ungrateful souls we shoulder troublesome tasks. At such times, we will cling close to Jesus and seek consolation in the thought that His sufferings, both interior and exterior, were infinitely greater than ours. In union with Jesus, suffering, let us immolate ourselves to the heavenly Father for the conversion of sinners.

How can I testify my gratitude today for all that Jesus has suffered for me?

Second Point

JESUS ARRAIGNED BEFORE THE HIGH-PRIEST

Jesus, bound, was first led to Annas, one of His most bitter enemies, who vented the full measure of his wrath

upon Him. Not being authorized to condemn Jesus, he sent Him to Caiphas, who was high-priest that year, about whom were assembled many members of the council. This session of the court was characterized by an injustice that staggers belief. All the judges were the fiercest enemies of Christ, Who by the wisdom of His doctrines, the sanctity of His life, and the astounding miracles He had wrought, had gained renown as the benefactor of the people, and excited their jealousy. They had been on the lookout for an opportunity to rid themselves of Him. Such was the godless and blood-thirsty council before which Jesus, the Son of God, the Judge of the living and the dead, willed to appear.

The high-priest asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine, although it was well known to the public what Jesus for the space of three years had taught openly, and His disciples were also known. Playing the hypocrite, Caiphas sought to entrap Jesus and find, at least, a subterfuge to accuse Him. With the same meekness which had often in the Temple won the admiration of the multitude, Jesus now answered: "I have spoken openly to the world—ask them who have heard what I have spoken unto them: behold, they know what things I have said" (John 18, 20-21). Concerning the Apostles, however, Jesus was silent because He would teach us not to reveal the faults of our neighbor without necessity. The answer Jesus made with reference to His doctrine is quite in harmony with His infinite wisdom and holiness. He appeals to the testimony of the people, making it manifest that He has nothing to fear from such a rigorous investigation of His doctrine and His actions.

Oh, that in the day of judgment, we may be able to

appeal to the testimony of co-religious of the children and especially of the holy angels!

Affections: O sweetest Jesus, how art Thou buffeted and ill-treated by Thy enemies, but still more by Thy love which empowered them to act thus! I thank Thee for the unspeakable sorrows Thou didst endure on this painful journey, and pray Thee to offer to the heavenly Father all Thy fatiguing steps, in atonement for my sinful steps. Grant me, O my most amiable Jesus, a heart filled with indulgence and tender devotion to the wants of my neighbor, that in imitation of Thy example I may excuse the faults of others and strive to ward off from them every ill.

Resolution: For the love of Jesus, I will cheerfully bear whatever is difficult and irksome in my duties among the children entrusted to me . . .

Spiritual Bouquet: "Draw me, O Lord, and I will run after Thee in the odor of Thy ointments."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR WEDNESDAY

FURTHER INCIDENTS OF THE TRIAL BEFORE CAIPHAS

"And when He had said these things, one of the servants standing by, gave Jesus a blow, saying: 'Answerest Thou the high-priest so?' Jesus answered him: 'If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why strikest thou Me?' " (John 18, 22-23).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus with hands bound and eyes cast down, standing before the assembled grand council.

Second Prelude: Penetrate my heart, O Jesus, with a lively sorrow at sight of the ignominy heaped upon Thee, and grant me the grace to imitate Thy wonderful meekness and patience.

First Point

JESUS STRUCK IN THE FACE BY ONE OF THE SERVANTS

Jesus having answered the high-priest calmly, in a manner becoming His Divine Majesty, the ruffianly servant of the high-priest struck the Face of the Most High with an unjust, painful and shameful blow, saying: "Answerest Thou the high-priest so?" Who can measure the insult and affront thus heaped upon our Divine Lord, the King of heaven and earth! He, the Lord of creation, the infinite Wisdom receives a shameful blow—the vilest insult that can be offered a person of His rank—and that before the whole court at the hand of a servant. Oh, the marvelous meekness of our Divine Lord! Though, He could instantaneously have punished the vile wretch by causing the ruthless hand to wither away, He replied meekly: "Why strikest thou Me?" Thus acts a shamefully abused God! Dare we poor creatures presume to complain of the least suffering or insult? Oh, make reparation to your Blessed Lord and Saviour for such brutal treatment, and in union with all the angels and saints praise and extol His meekness and love. Let your heart be moved to profound gratitude when recalling the words of St. Peter: "For unto this are you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps. Who did not sin, neither was guile in his mouth. Who, when He was reviled, did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened

not: but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly" (I Peter 2, 21-23).

Second Point

JESUS ACCUSED BY FALSE WITNESSES AND PRONOUNCED GUILTY OF DEATH

The unjust judges sought false witnesses to testify against the holiest and most innocent One. Jesus made no answer to their false accusations, although now, too, He could have said to them: "Which one of you can accuse Me of a sin?" How does the holy silence of our Saviour shame our pride, ever ready with fluent tongue to assert our innocence, even in the face of guilt! At the question of the high-priest: "Answerest Thou nothing to the things which these witness against Thee?" Jesus was, likewise, silent. But when Caiphas, with malicious cunning, adjured Him in the name of the Living God, to tell him if He be Christ the Son of the Living God, Jesus answered solemnly: "Thou hast said it: I say to you, hereafter, you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of Heaven." Oh, the wisdom of the dispensations of Divine Providence! Caiphas, by this question, effected a solemn declaration before the entire assembly of the divine dignity and sublime mission of Christ. For the judges this declaration was a stern admonition to be ever mindful of the rigorous justice of the judgments of God. And yet, such solemn words from the lips of Jesus, the Eternal Wisdom, made no impression on their hardened hearts, and the entire great council pronounced the unjust sentence of death upon the Man-God.

O my soul, for thy sake Jesus submits to the most

shameful death; against thee had been issued the death warrant, "He is guilty of death." In His infinite mercy the Son of God takes thy place and by His own death restores to thee the hope of life everlasting. What will I do today to make a grateful return of love for the infinite love of my Saviour?

Affections: O Jesus, Son of the Living God, Thou splendor of His glory, and of the same Divine Essence! How shamefully art Thou abused by Thy unworthy creatures! Where are ye, ye blessed spirits, ye angels of heaven? How can ye abide the unjust, cruel treatment thus accorded your King? O Sacred Face of my Divine Saviour! My sins, too, are the cause of the injustice and abuse heaped upon Thee! Give me the grace of true compunction and heartfelt grief, that I may love Thee in return, sincerely repent of my sins, obtain pardon and follow Thee on the way of the cross, with grateful love, humility and patience.

Resolution: I will patiently bear with the shortcomings and weaknesses of others.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Oh, cast me not away from Thee, and Thy holy Spirit take not away from me!"

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR THURSDAY

THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS DURING THE NIGHT IN THE HOUSE OF CAIPHAS

"And the men that held Him mocked Him and struck Him. And they blindfolded Him and smote His Face. And they asked Him, saying: 'Prophesy, who it is that

struck Thee?' And blaspheming, many other things they said against Him" (Luke 22, 63-65).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus in the midst of the brutal soldiers and servants, who maltreat Him most shamefully.

Second Prelude: Heart of Jesus, satiated with shame and sorrow, let me realize the value of humiliations, that henceforth I may not fly from them, but for love of Thee embrace them courageously.

First Point

THE INSULTS HEAPED UPON JESUS DURING THE NIGHT

Having pronounced the death warrant, the high-priest abandoned our Blessed Lord to the caprice of the guard and the servants. These vile creatures spat upon Him and disfigured His Sacred Countenance, into which the angels delight to gaze. The prophet Isaias had foretold, and Jesus Himself emphasized especially this phase of His passion, when He said to His disciples: "And they shall mock Him and spit on Him and scourge Him and kill Him, and the third day He shall rise again" (Luke 10, 34). Jesus willed to endure such insults and to be degraded in the most abject manner to atone for our pride. These inhuman brutes blindfolded and buffeted Jesus and struck Him in the face. Christ's inexpressible patience goaded on His executioners all the more. His meekness incensed them, His silence provoked their rage. Their stripes were multiplied, the shameful mockery was ever again renewed, and so this inhuman treatment was continued throughout the entire night.

What the innocent Lamb of God suffered in the midst

of the rabble till break of day, is so appalling that the Evangelists could not prevail upon themselves to detail it. Who would even attempt to depict the contemptible and shameful abuses heaped upon our suffering Saviour at the hands of these godless monsters, goaded on by the pharisees!

With all the angels and saints, prostrate before Him, let us profoundly adore our despised and outraged Saviour, as the Supreme Majesty, Who thus abased Himself to the lowest depths of humiliation, to teach us the malice of pride. Let us offer His abasement and shame to the heavenly Father, to obtain the grace of profound humility and invincible meekness, that in humble recognition of our sinfulness we may accept with loving resignation the wholesome chastisements of the heavenly Father.

Second Point

WHY DID JESUS WILL TO SUFFER SUCH INHUMAN TORMENTS?

Jesus willed to take upon Himself such insults and expose Himself to such maltreatment above all, to make atonement for our sins. He Himself once revealed to St. Angela of Foligno: "For your vanity and love of self I suffered my countenance to be disfigured and dishonored, by a blow on the cheek. Because you misuse your eyes to contemplate the vain things of the world, and take complacency in them, I have wept the most bitter tears and suffered my eyes to be blindfolded, bathed them in My Precious Blood which flowed from My forehead. Because you so readily listen to flatteries and vanities, I permitted false accusation, calumnies, condemnation, ridicule and blasphemies to come upon Me. To atone for your sins of the tongue, I held My lips sealed, and prayed

from the depths of My Heart for My malicious enemies." Oh, let us remember that we also contributed to the sufferings of Jesus during this painful night. If feelings of anger against those who so shamefully insulted and ill-treated our Divine Lord well up in our hearts, let us direct them against ourselves, because our sins, more than the inhuman rabble and the unjust judges, were the cause of the untold sufferings of Jesus. Even now, yet, Jesus is frequently insulted, dishonored and ridiculed in the Sacrament of His Love. We, however, will strive, out of grateful love and deepest veneration to make reparation of honor and console Him by acts of praise and adoration. Should an opportunity to suffer slightly with and for Him be offered us occasionally, let us think of the love of Jesus, and rejoice that we can, at least in some measure, requite such infinite love. How many graces, what consolation, should such a practice not insure for us!

Affections: O my Jesus, I see Thee endure the greatest insults and reviling for love of me, and I blush for shame that I am too weak, too cowardly to endure even the slightest insult for love of Thee. Thy Divine Heart is satiated with the most bitter humiliations that I may learn from Thy example to conquer my impatience and sensitiveness, silently and patiently to embrace the trials which Thy love imposes on me. O my Divine Saviour, give me Thy holy love; it alone can strengthen and encourage me to endure trials and sufferings with composure, even with a holy joy, in union with Thy sacred passion.

Resolution: For the love of Jesus, maltreated and shamefully outraged, I will courageously combat all sensitiveness.

Spiritual Bouquet: "I am the reproach of men and the outcast of the people" (Ps. 21, 7).

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR FRIDAY

THREEFOLD DENIAL BY PETER

"And Peter followed Him afar off, even to the court of the high priest. And going in he sat with the servants that he might see the end" (Matt. 26, 53).

First Prelude: Observe Peter warming himself at the fire among the soldiers and servants of the high priest.

Second Prelude: O Divine Saviour, let me realize my utter weakness, and give me a wholesome fear and mistrust of self.

First Point

INCIDENTS OF PETER'S THREEFOLD DENIAL

The capture of Jesus had filled His Apostles with such fear and dread that they fled in all directions. Having recovered from his first fright, Peter followed the procession and our Blessed Lord at a distance, and with the aid of another disciple, presumably St. John, gained access to the court of the high priest. Here a maid-servant saw him. Peter's timidity made her suspicious, and curiously she asked: "Art thou one of the disciples of this man?" Peter denied Him saying, "Woman, I know Him not." This answer of Peter was an unpremeditated lie, a subterfuge to escape a threatening danger—some expounders of the Scriptures allege not even a grievous sin—but it was the first step on the way of evil. It is a striking

example of human weakness. Let us guard against the first, apparently insignificant, misstep.

Soon after the first denial another maid, seeing Peter, said to the by-standers: "This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth." Again he denied his Master, but this time with an oath: "I know not the man." Peter thus falls more deeply. His first denial was a lie, the second he, the Prince of the Apostles, confirmed with a false oath. One fault occasions another, and each succeeding fall is more grievous than the foregoing. Let us here learn the importance of attaching great weight even to trifling infidelities. They invariably lead to greater ones.

The servants, however, not believing that Peter knew Jesus not, one of them said to him: "Surely, thou art also one of them, for even thy speech doth discover thee!" Peter then began to curse and to swear and most solemnly protest that he did not so much as know the Man of whom they spoke. Thus Peter severed himself wholly from his Master by a public denial of faith. How rapid and how deep the fall of the unhappy Apostle! In the short space of two hours, Peter thrice denied his Master, and swore falsely twice; and this despite the fact that neither death nor any other great evil threatened him. How weak and unstable is man! What an earnest admonition to guard against vain presumption and self-confidence is this deplorable fall of the Prince of Apostles!

Second Point

CAUSES OF THE FALL OF PETER

The expounders of Sacred Scripture designate excessive self-trust as main cause of Peter's fall. He overrated his

strength. It seemed impossible to him that he should ever waver in the love of, and fidelity to, his Master. At the Last Supper he had assured Jesus: "I will die for Thee." Later, when our Divine Saviour said to His Apostles: "This night you shall all be scandalized in Me," Peter answered: "Though all should forsake Thee, I will never abandon Thee." To this presumptuous assertion on the part of the Apostle, our Lord made answer by foretelling his threefold denial: "Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice." "Lord," said Peter, self-consciously, "I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison and to death." God resisteth the proud. Pride goeth before a fall.

A further cause of the fall of Peter was his neglect of prayer. The Lord had expressly warned the Apostles, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." The Apostles were fatigued, it was late at night, and as a matter of course, sleep overpowered them. All these circumstances rendered prayer more difficult for them. Peter neglects to pray and—falls, deeply.

Be faithful in prayer, especially in your daily prayers of obligation. Do not easily seek to dispense yourself. A Christian without prayer is like a soldier without weapons, a lamp without oil, a plant without light, air, and moisture. Again, Peter did not avoid the danger of sin. His natural insight must have told him that the company of soldiers and servants of the high priest should be dangerous for him. Nevertheless, he courted danger and succumbed to it.

Can there be a more impressive and practical illustration of the necessity of avoiding the occasion to sin, than the fall of Peter?

Affections: O Divine Saviour, what bitter drops in

Thy chalice of sufferings must the denial of Peter have been! He had solemnly proclaimed his faith on a former occasion, had received countless marks of Thy special affection, and now he denied Thee out of detestable human respect. I must confess that I, too, have often acted as basely. How often have I promised Thee unswerving fidelity, but to my shame I must confess that I have violated my promise. Tepidity in Thy service, negligence in the discharge of my duties, especially those incumbent upon me by virtue of my sublime vocation, have made me resemble Thy faithless Apostle. Henceforth, it shall be so no more. I will belong wholly to Thee, my heart shall beat for Thee alone. But without Thee and Thy grace, I can do nothing—with Thee I can do all things. Strengthen me, Divine Saviour, that I may serve Thee with unflinching fidelity in great as well as small things, become ever more closely united to Thee, and attain to everlasting intimate union with Thee in heaven.

Resolution: I will seek to discover which inclinations most frequently have been the cause of my transgressions in the past, and strive to conquer them.

Spiritual Bouquet: "O Lord, cast me not away from Thee!"

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR SATURDAY

THE REPENTANCE OF PETER

"And the Lord turning looked on Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, as He had said; 'Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice.' And Peter going out wept bitterly" (Luke 22, 61-62).

First Prelude: Behold Peter, bitterly bewailing his sins.

Second Prelude: O my Jesus, let me fully realize the infinite goodness of Thy Sacred Heart to sinners, that it may imbue me with sentiments of a lively contrition and perfect love.

First Point

THE SAVIOUR'S LOOK OF GRACE

While Peter was yet speaking, constantly aggravating his guilt, Jesus was being led across the court. With inexpressible sorrow and compassion He cast a gracious glance upon the fallen disciple, who at once felt himself moved to the depths of his soul. The Saviour's glance was a look of reproach, but, at the same time, the expression of the boundless love that filled His Sacred Heart for the erring disciple. The gracious look of our dear Lord dispelled the darkness that had enveloped Peter's soul, showed him clearly the greatness of his sin, and filled his heart with unspeakable sorrow. It penetrated to the very depths of Peter's heart and effected his conversion.

Oh, the abysmal love of our dear Lord! Suffering the most excruciating pains, tormented by His enemies, falsely accused, He forgets Himself, His own bitter sufferings and thinks of His fallen disciple. Peter's deplorable fall is of greater concern to the Saviour's loving Heart than the abuses heaped upon Himself.

Let us pray our Divine Saviour to cast upon us, too, a look of compassion, should we have the misfortune to commit a fault. If He would draw us away from the path of tepidity and sloth, let us offer no resistance but

cheerfully follow in His footprints, on the narrow way of the cross. Oh, that Jesus were ever before our eyes! He looks upon us, too, with a merciful eye and with the tenderest solicitude notes our progress in the practice of virtue. Do I strive earnestly at the daily meditation and the particular examen to excite contrition that springs from perfect love?

Second Point

QUALITIES OF PETER'S CONVERSION AND REPENTANCE

Peter's conversion was immediate. Hardly had our Blessed Saviour cast on Him a look of love and compassion when Peter burst into tears. Peter corresponded with the helping grace offered him, opened his heart to it and was, therefore, converted.

Am I prompt to follow the inspirations imparted to me during the hour of meditation, the time of examination of conscience, at my Eucharistic Visits, in the counsels and directions of my superiors? Dear Lord, teach me the importance of co-operating promptly with Thy saving grace.

The conversion of the Prince of the Apostles was, furthermore, sincere. Proof for this is furnished by the bitter tears of compunction that he shed at the mere remembrance of his weakness and cowardice. A stronger proof, however, is the fact that he at once quit the proximate occasion of sin, as we read in the gospel narrative. Peter, weighed down with unspeakable grief, went out into the darkness of the night and wept bitterly.

To shun the danger of sin is the first step to true repentance. This holds as well of willful occasions of

venial sin as of the occasions of mortal sin. Am I deserving of reproach in this regard? Do I, perhaps, indulge in conversations which I know, from experience, to be occasions of venial sin, which hinder holy recollection, distract me in prayer, and fill my mind with worldly thoughts and desires? Lastly, the conversion of Peter was constant and persevering. His repentance was not merely passing; sorrow for his base denial oppressed him all his life, so that he wept bitterly at the mere thought of it. His whole future life was spent in promoting the glory of his Master, and, great as was his fall, his repentance was still greater. By his life-long satisfaction, Peter has truly become the model of penitents.

Our repentance and conversion, too, must be constant and persevering. Let us not relax, but incessantly repent of our sins. Let us, in the spirit of penance, accept the daily little inconveniences and discomforts. The patient bearing of such minor sufferings is a penance more pleasing to God than many lukewarm Christians are willing to believe. How am I disposed in this regard?

Affections: Lord Jesus, oh, that my contrition and penance resembled that of the Prince of the Apostles! Alas, I fall so frequently and am so slow to rise after a fall. Peter sincerely and bitterly bewailed his sins, but ah, how insufficient is my compunction! O my dear Saviour, give me true, sincere contrition and compassion for Thee, that by redoubled fervor and love of Thee, I may repair the many infidelities of my past life. Grant that in the humble remembrance of my utter weakness and instability, I may be gentle and considerate to others, bear with their weaknesses and defects, and thus, by mildness and indulgence towards my neighbor, render myself worthy of the love of Thy Divine Heart.

Resolution: For the love of Jesus, I will vanquish self in those things especially which are most repugnant to nature.

Spiritual Bouquet: "A contrite and humbled heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

Prayer: O Jesus living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

JESUS CASTS OUT A DEVIL

"And He was casting out a devil and the same was dumb" (Luke 11, 14).

First Prelude: Behold this poor victim possessed by a devil, standing before Jesus: he is not able to speak, therefore others must intercede for him.

Second Prelude: Teach me, O Divine Saviour, to use my tongue solely for Thy honor.

First Point

THE NECESSITY OF SPEAKING AT THE RIGHT TIME

When Jesus had expelled the devil from the dumb man to the great astonishment of all, the latter spoke. The devil had completely controlled the tongue of this poor victim and employed it at will. We can learn from this that the Evil Spirit has power to entice us to sins of the tongue. He may hinder us from speaking in due season, and even induce us to be silent when we ought to speak. In like manner, thousands of souls have fallen basely by neglecting to make a candid confession of their faults in the sacred tribunal of Penance, thus effecting their own ruin. Many others are silent, though the honor

of God and Christian charity would have them speak. Again others, who by a mere consoling, encouraging and counseling word could easily rescue a soul from perdition, through detestable human respect refrain from speaking. The devil has secured their tongue. Full of malice and hatred, he hinders the good they might do and employs them to accomplish his sinister purpose.

Sad to say, even religious expose themselves to the danger of thus falling a prey to the wily tempter by giving ear to his insinuations. Through wounded pride, sensitiveness and human respect they refrain from speaking when they ought to speak; consequently, they will soon become wholly dumb before God in prayer. Whilst they are busy in animated discourses with self-love, they have nothing to say to their God. The time of meditation and vocal prayer leaves them arid and without fruit for their souls. Failing to find in intimate communion with God the consolation and strength that fall to the happy lot of faithful souls, they lead a purely natural, exceedingly melancholy life. Should we not guard assiduously against the pernicious influence of the Evil One, by caution in the use of our tongue? How easily could I make use of my conversations to promote the glory of God directly or indirectly? If I speak on edifying topics, I will unobtrusively effect good in the hearts of others. I will become a fit instrument of the Holy Ghost in the service of charity to lead many souls to God.

Let us beg the Saviour in Holy Communion to sanctify our tongue, which He so frequently consecrates by close contact with His Sacred Body. Oh, may we never grieve His Sacred Heart by a sinful silence and never offend Him with our words! O Mary, teach us the holy art of conversing with God, and with our neighbor for God's sake.

SECOND POINT

THE VALUE OF SILENCE

There is scarcely to be found so effective a means to evade the snares of the Evil One as silence. Silence teaches us, furthermore, how to speak. By becoming accustomed to silence we gradually break ourselves of the bad habits we may have acquired in the use of our tongue, such as uttering unkind, boastful words, in general, such as still savor of the world. By observing silence, we can deliberate what to speak and conform our words to the rules of religious modesty, humility, meekness, prudence, and Christian charity.

Silence is the source of holy thoughts, pious aspirations and recollection. Would we become interior souls, then we must learn to pray and meditate, to cherish intimate, loving intercourse with God—we must learn to be silent. Oh, how many sins should have been avoided had we better observed the rule of silence! How much time have we lost by useless words, how often sullied our hearts by unkind, vain, impatient and over-sensitive words! Should there be need of further considerations to impress deeply upon us the value of silence and to endear it to us, then let us remember that by every violation of this virtue we injure our fellow-religious and desecrate our tongue which is daily purpled with Christ's Precious Blood. Let us, then, resolve never to give pain to His Sacred Heart!

Affections: My Saviour and my God, I thank Thee for having so lovingly warned me of the dangers by which the enemy of my soul seeks to entrap me. It is so easy to fall a prey to his wiles by uttering sinful, vain or boastful words, by which the tongue of a religious should never

be defiled. Make me prudent and circumspect in conversation, and patient in silence. Preserve my tongue, which Thou daily consecratest by contact with Thee in Holy Communion, pure and untainted. Grant that I employ it in Thy service alone, for Thy honor and greater glory, O Lord, by Thy infinite mercy, I beseech Thee to release from the tyranny of the Evil One so many souls fettered by its disgraceful bonds, that in this holy season they may rise to a new life for which Thou hast merited abundant grace by Thy bitter passion and death.

Resolution: I will conscientiously observe the rule of silence, so as to be qualified for intimate communion with God in prayer.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth."

Prayer: O Jesus living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR MONDAY

CONCLUSION OF THE PROCEEDINGS IN THE HOUSE OF CAIPHAS

"And when the morning was come, all the chief priests and ancients of the people took counsel against Jesus that they might put Him to death" (Matt. 27, 1).

First Prelude: Behold how Jesus prays silently while His enemies maltreat and deride Him, and at break of day eagerly enters upon His passion.

Second Prelude: O Jesus, replenish my heart with a generous, strong, and self sacrificing love in Thy holy service.

First Point

THE COUNCIL OF THE JEWS DELIVERED JESUS TO THE ROMAN GOVERNOR

Having abandoned Jesus to the servants, the high-priests withdrew to rest. But the hate they bore the holiest One pressed them to assemble for the second time, early in the morning, to deliver Him to the Roman governor. With great unrest they awaited the break of day. How assiduous and indefatigable were not these godless wretches in heaping contempt and ridicule upon the innocent Lamb of God! In the middle of the night they interrupted their sleep to pass sentence, and by daylight they were again in full activity to consult how they could best ensure the execution of their sentence.

How many sinners make great sacrifices, deny themselves rest and sleep to gratify their evil inclinations and commit sin! They display more zeal to effect their own ruin and that of others, than we to console the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to work out our salvation and to exercise the apostolate of fraternal charity. When our actions aim at satisfying vanity or sensuality—when we try to achieve our selfish purposes, we often realize the seemingly incredible. But how slothful and negligent are we not occasionally when obedience or charity demands an act of self-sacrifice! We find a thousand reasons, a thousand excuses, we imagine that too much is exacted of us, that no consideration is given us. Must we not confess that in some measure, at least, we resemble the enemies of Jesus? For the future, we will repent of our sinful zeal and our sloth in doing good.

Am I always disposed to sacrifice rest, comfort, and convenience when the duties of my holy vocation demand it?

Second Point

JESUS DESIRES HIS PASSION

Our Lord and Saviour, Divine Omnipotence, knew full well the perversity and wickedness of the hearts of these malicious judges. He penetrated their ruthless plans to put Him to death. He, too, full of longing awaited the break of day, in order to consummate the work of the redemption and by His death to merit life for the whole world, also for these infamous wretches. He awaited the day praying uninterruptedly for His cruel executioners, who suffered Him not a moment's rest. Oh, with what love did He greet the first streaks of the dawn of this great day for which the patriarchs of old longed so ardently, which He Himself desired so vehemently! This great day of Immolation, which was the aim of His life, which was to accomplish our salvation, and on which He was to fulfill the Will of His heavenly Father! How tenderly, lovingly did He thank His Father for the day on which He should shed His Blood to the last drop for us!

In spirit kneel beside your Divine Saviour and thank Him with all the fervor and intensity of your heart for the incomprehensible, self-immolating love, which prompted Him to deliver Himself wholly and entirely for you. Thank the heavenly Father that the day of redemption has dawned, but never forget at what price our dear Saviour purchased us back on that day. Oh, how insignificant is our love of the cross when compared with that of Jesus! Perhaps we hardly perceive in our hearts a desire to manifest our love by sharing in His great sacrifice. How will I prove my gratitude to Jesus in future, especially today, in return for the love which prompted Him to long for the day of His passion?

Affections: O my beloved Saviour, that it had been possible for me to share Thy confinement in the prison during that night of bitter sufferings and afford Thee some slight consolation and alleviation in Thy bitter pains! Let me abide with Thee to console Thee, to make reparation, and to pray with Thee for sinners. O my beloved Saviour, who didst long with inexpressible desire to die in order to give me life, I pray Thee enkindle in my heart the flame of a holy zeal, that it may encourage and reanimate me gladly to suffer for Thee in return.

Resolution: I will utilize every opportunity to prove my love to Jesus by frequent acts of self-denial and mortification.

Spiritual Bouquet: "He hath loved me and delivered Himself for me."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR TUESDAY

JESUS IS TAKEN TO PILATE

"Then they led Jesus from Caiphas to the governor's hall and it was morning: And they went not into the hall, that they might not be defiled, but that they might eat the pasch. Pilate therefore went out to them, and said: "What accusation bring you against this man?" They answered, and said to him: "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to Thee" (John 18, 28-30).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus, bound, on the way to the court of Pilate.

Second Prelude: O my Divine Saviour, give me grace

to disregard the opinion of others, and always to act according to Thy pleasure.

First Point

JESUS ON THE WAY TO PILATE

We read in the gospel that the ancients, as soon as day broke, again sat in council deliberating whether or not to condemn Jesus to death. Having heard from His adorable lips the solemn declaration that He is the Son of God, they said, in their utter blindness: "He is guilty of death." They were, however, not empowered to pass the final sentence of death and hence made haste to lead Jesus before Pilate. Again Jesus, cruelly bound, was the butt of the rude and wanton soldiers and the guards who had ill-treated Him during the night. From all parts of Jerusalem the people gathered together who had once hungered for His doctrine, who a few days previously had greeted Him with unparalleled enthusiasm as the promised Messiah. This same populace now beheld in Him a godless man; a man whom the high-priests branded as a hypocrite, a blasphemer. They beheld in Him a malefactor who should finally suffer condign punishment, a man of whose maliciousness even His disciples were aware, otherwise they would not have deserted Him. Thus all Israel denied and misjudged their Saviour and Redeemer. What pain for the most loving Heart of Jesus now satiated with contempt and saturated with opprobrium!

Dare we, His spouses, tolerate in our hearts the desire to be loved and esteemed by others? Should we not, rather, deem ourselves happy to meet with disrespect or to be misjudged by those to whom we do good?

Second Point

THE ENEMIES OF JESUS BEFORE THE HOUSE OF PILATE

The procession having arrived before the house of Pilate, the Jews for fear of becoming unclean hesitated to enter. Here they showed themselves truly as hypocrites and verified the reproaches our Lord so often made to them. Pilate, therefore, went out to them and said: "What accusation bring you against this Man?" They answered and said to him: "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to thee." So little were they convinced of their justice in the matter, that they dared not bring forth complaints against the Saviour; they desired that Pilate condemn Jesus on their testimony without further investigation. Their wickedness had turned them so blind. The Jews feared to enumerate the apparent misdeeds of our Blessed Lord.

How many, alas, resemble the enemies of Christ! Like the pharisees who blinded themselves to the holiness of our Divine Lord, and out of their hatred and envy sought to destroy Him, these in the perversity of their heart misjudge their neighbors. The success attendant upon our earnest efforts and the recognition accorded one's work, often stimulates others to jealousy, and not seldom even to detraction and slander.

Even in religious communities there is danger of yielding to envy and jealousy. Let us be mindful that by manifesting joy in the good our fellow-religious do, we participate in all their merits, whereas by envy and jealousy we merely aggravate our guilt.

Affections: O Jesus, God of holiness, in what a condition Thou didst will to appear before men! In order to free me Thou didst take my sins upon Thee. O holy,

pure, and spotless Victim, how pleasing Thou art to the Father! Thou alone canst take away the sins of the world and render bountiful satisfaction. What ignominy and sufferings our sins have caused Thee! With sentiments of the deepest gratitude we will accompany Thee, O Jesus, on the way of suffering and with Thee, willingly endure the hardships of life and the contempt of creatures, and thus be made worthy to participate in the merits of Thy sacred passion.

Resolution: Remembering my own sins, I will try to be very charitable in judging others.

Spiritual Bouquet: "A clean heart create in me, O Lord, and a right spirit renew in my interior."

Prayer: O Jesus living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR WEDNESDAY

THE FIRST JUDICIAL EXAMINATION IN THE COURT OF PILATE

"Pilate therefore went into the hall again and called Jesus, and said to Him: 'Art Thou the King of the Jews?' Jesus answered: 'Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or have others told it thee of Me?' Pilate answered: 'Am I a Jew? Thy own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee up to me: What hast Thou done?' Jesus answered: 'My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews: But now my kingdom is not from hence'" (John 18, 33-37).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus in the court of Pilate.

Second Prelude: O Jesus, God of truth and King of glory, grant me the grace to know Thee better that I may love Thee more ardently and follow Thee more faithfully.

First Point

"MY KINGDOM IS NOT FROM HENCE"

Seeing that Pilate was not inclined to condemn Jesus to death on their testimony alone, the Jews broke forth in complaints, saying: "We have found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that He is Christ, the King." Pilate, therefore, asked Him: "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" O august mystery! In the desert Satan offered Him all the kingdoms of this world, but was repulsed. The kingdom of Christ is the union of all who willingly submit to His holy doctrine and His laws. It is an empire of poverty, humility, patience, love, and mercy. To this empire Christ referred when He said to Pilate: "My kingdom is not from hence," and again the admonition to His disciples: "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice" (Matt. 6, 33).

How fortunate must we deem ourselves to be children of the Catholic Church, the kingdom of God on earth! How happy, to have been called to a vocation that makes the seeking of this invisible kingdom by the striving for perfection, our sole bounden duty. May our one ambition be to subject ourselves to the King of this empire. We will beg Him to take His abode in our hearts and to reign therein that we may become fit instruments to win others to His love. Let us lament the blindness of the Jews in rejecting their true King, who desired naught but to render them happy here and hereafter, and at the same

time, remember that if we would reign with Christ we must suffer with Him in this life.

Are all the inclinations of my heart docile to Him? Have I, in particular, subjected pride and self-will to His sway?

Second Point

"FOR THIS I CAME INTO THE WORLD: THAT I SHOULD GIVE TESTIMONY TO THE TRUTH"

In our stead Jesus answered Pilate that He came into the world to give testimony to the truth, and that He who hears His voice is of the truth. Pilate, the earthly-minded, idolatrous pagan had no conception of these words, though addressed to Him by the lips of Eternal Truth. Jesus had testified to the truth by His doctrines, for no one could accuse Him of error—by His example, which corresponded in every detail to His doctrine—by His death, by which He confirmed His teachings. The Saviour has transmitted to us the plenitude of eternal truth in His holy Church. It is our bounden duty, therefore, to ponder these truths more and more, and to make our lives accord with the known truth. As disciples of Christ we must give testimony of His gospel, and by our whole demeanor proclaim aloud the truth of His doctrine. How deplorable were it not, if like Pilate, devoid of a sincere desire to become acquainted with the truth, we, too, should merit the reproach which Jesus made His incredulous contemporaries, that they love darkness more than light (John 3, 19).

Are we grateful when our superiors reprimand us to aid us in acquiring self-knowledge and thus to effect our betterment? Ask yourself, my soul, whether or not you always receive such words of eternal life in good part, and strive zealously to correct your faults.

Affections: O King of Eternal Glory, it is meet and just for Thee to be a King of this world also. But Thy infinite love rejects all earthly honors and possessions, because Thou wouldst set us an example of humility, wouldst encourage us to despise worldly honors and to strive for the possession of heavenly treasures alone. O Divine Teacher, let us realize that all is naught save to love God and serve Him alone. Teach us heavenly wisdom and truth, which treads all earthly things under foot. Whatever comes from God is truth—Thy holy doctrine, Thy commandments, Thy example, Thy wounds and Thy means of grace. Oh, may our lives ever accord with these truths, that walking in the truth here below, we may one day behold Thee face to face in Thy glory.

Resolution: I will frequently offer thanksgiving to my Divine King for having called me to His holy service, and observe my Holy Rule with great fidelity.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR THURSDAY

THE SILENCE OF JESUS

"And when He was accused by the chief priests and ancients, He answered nothing. Then Pilate saith to Him: 'Dost Thou not hear how great testimonies they allege against Thee?' And He answered them never a word, so that the governor wondered exceedingly" (Matt. 27, 14).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus silent, bound like a criminal before the heathen Judge.

Second Prelude: Ask grace to value His marvelous example of silence in order to love and imitate it.

First Point

MOTIVES FOR THE ADMIRABLE SILENCE OF JESUS

Hatred goaded on the enemies of Jesus to add new accusations to those already made, of which they could not substantiate a single one. Jesus, however, replied never a word, a cause of much confusion to the governor, who said: "Dost Thou not hear how great testimonies they allege against Thee?" Again, Jesus was silent. If the pagan governor wondered exceedingly at the marvelous silence of Jesus, how much more must we admire it and seek to penetrate the motives that prompted Jesus to set us such an example. Jesus was silent to atone for our vain excuses, our false justifications of self. He was silent for love of His enemies, of whom He would not speak ill. He was silent to merit for us the grace to suffer silently for love of Him, and by doing so to accumulate heavenly treasures.

While His accusers vented their fury and passionate hatred against Him in a tumultuous clamor, He opened not His mouth to utter a single contradiction. He felt deeply the most bitter pangs of such insults, but He offered them for us poor sinners to His heavenly Father, Who laid upon Him the sins of all mankind. Upon how many souls has the heroic silence of Jesus made a deep and lasting impression! It has animated thousands to astound heaven and earth by a similar silence in the face of unjust accusations. He has called us in His mercy to lead a life of

silence and recollection in imitation of His example. Let us resolve to imitate the admirable silence of Jesus if ever we should be the victim of unjust accusations.

Second Point

WHY SHOULD WE IMITATE THE SILENCE OF JESUS

Many consider themselves spiritually and corporally too weak to follow Jesus on the way of the cross, to bear sufferings and severe mortifications voluntarily, but all can imitate His holy silence. By silence we manifest our love for Jesus, increase our merits incessantly, and facilitate our progress in perfection. A neglect of silence prepares the way of sin and robs us of countless treasures. Such neglect makes us prone to all manner of imperfections.

We violate humility by over-sensitiveness and vain excuses—charity, by indulging our spirit of criticism. We lose time in idle conversations, or what is worse the merit of sacrifice by untimely murmurings and complaints. We fail through curiosity and distract others by our useless talk. Meanwhile, our fellow-religious are accumulating treasure upon treasure by fidelity to the rule of silence, and we daily and hourly suffer irreparable losses through negligence and carelessness in the use of our tongue. We will beg Jesus, through the merits of His holy silence, to strengthen us so that we may henceforth open our lips only for His honor and the welfare of our neighbor. How do I observe silence? Does my love of silence bear witness to my being a good religious?

Affections: O my Jesus, how great and sublime is the oblation of Thy holy silence, immolated to the heavenly Father for the salvation of the world! I pray Thee, by Thy infinite merits, grant me the grace never to abuse my

tongue by sinful discourse. I repent of all sins and scandals of which I have been guilty in the past by misuse of my tongue. Oh, that in the hour of my death, not a single unnecessary, sinful word may be my accuser before the tribunal of Thy Majesty. Grant me the grace, O Jesus, to imitate Thy most adorable silence.

Resolution: I will conscientiously observe silence as prescribed by our Holy Rule, and for the love of Jesus will refrain from excusing myself when admonished.

Spiritual Bouquet: "But Jesus answered nothing."

Prayer: O Jesus living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR FRIDAY

JESUS AT THE COURT OF HEROD

"And he questioned Him in many words. But He answered him nothing. And Herod with his army set Him at nought, and mocked Him, putting on Him a white garment and sent Him back to Pilate" (Luke 23, 9, 11).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus, clad in a white garment at the court of Herod, mocked by the Jews.

Second Prelude: Give me the grace O my Jesus, to value the blessed folly of the cross, that I may learn to endure contempt for love of Thee.

First Point

JESUS REGARDS HEROD UNWORTHY OF AN ANSWER

Pilate, being convinced of the innocence of Jesus, dared not condemn Him to death. For fear of the Jews, on the other hand, he dared not liberate Him. Now he heard that Jesus was a Galilean, and wishing to rid himself of so disagreeable a case, he sent Jesus to Herod, who was then in Jerusalem. Contemplate Jesus led about

from one judgment seat to another. Follow your beloved Saviour on this painful and exceedingly humiliating journey. Scripture relates that Herod was glad to see Jesus, of Whom he had heard wonderful things, for this pleasure-seeking, worldly minded prince hoped to witness some great miracle. For this reason, prompted by curiosity, he put many questions to Jesus. Herod deserved no answer because he merely wished to amuse himself to satisfy his vain curiosity and by so doing subject the word of God to his scrutiny and judgment. Our Lord further made no answer to indicate His horror of the licentiousness of this hypocritical, wily worldling. Herod had heard the voice of John the Baptist, but had not heeded his warnings: on the contrary, to satisfy his passions, in cold-blooded frivolity had him put to death. Therefore, the Saviour, the purest and holiest One, deemed him unworthy of an answer.

Alas, how many hardened hearts compel Jesus to observe a similar silence in their regard! For so long a time He has favored them with His graces and inspirations, roused them by wholesome pangs of conscience, warned them by the penetrating admonitions of their superiors which they, however, cast aside. Now Jesus remains silent because His words are fruitless. Oh, that not one of us may ever be deserving of such chastisement!

How am I disposed at the present moment? Do I love to hear the voice of God and do I obey it readily?

Second Point

JESUS CLAD IN A WHITE GARMENT

When Herod saw how despicable he became by the silence of Jesus he sought revenge by making Him the

target of the mockery of the populace and the court, as one ignorant and not sound of mind. Accordingly, Herod ordered our Blessed Lord, as a mark of His narrow-mindedness, to be clad in a white garment. Oh, what must have been the sentiments of our Blessed Lord as He stood before this godless king, surrounded by a deriding people, who were making Him the butt of their malice and scorn! Well may the angels have turned away sorrowing from this appalling spectacle. Here the words of the prophet were fulfilled: "I am a worm and no man: the reproach of men and the outcast of the people" (Ps. 12, 7).

Jesus desired to suffer so much for us. He desired to wear the garment of mockery in order to merit for us the robe of innocence with which we were clad in Baptism, and the grace to preserve this robe pure and unstained through life, or to cleanse it in His Precious Blood should we ever have the misfortune to sully it. Jesus willed in particular to acquire bountiful merits for religious that by virtue of their holy vows the robe of innocence may be restored in fullest splendor. He willed further to do honor to the garb of penance, the holy habit of religion, which is so often a mark of derision in the eyes of the world.

All these blessings we owe to the ridicule which Jesus endured for love of us at the court of Herod. It is meet, then, that we, too, suffer a little scorn and shame, in imitation of His marvelous patience and resignation. It is difficult for our pride to accept humiliations: nevertheless, our natural repugnance can tend to great merit and not seldom it is transformed into sweet consolation, a reward God loves to tender courageous souls. Do I yield to sensitiveness and discouragement when reprimanded?

Affections: O Eternal Wisdom, Divine Word! Thy

love and the desire for our salvation pressed Thee so powerfully to endure all manner of interior and exterior sufferings, to be satiated with pain, ridicule, and contempt, as was foretold by the prophet! O my Jesus, I, too, have often offended Thee and requited Thy infinite love with ingratitude. Pardon me, I beseech Thee, and punish me not as Thou didst punish Herod, by refusing to let me hear Thy adorable voice. No, my Jesus, do not remain silent, no matter how unworthy I am to hear Thy words of light and truth. Do not deprive me of Thy holy inspirations. Behold, I am ready to heed Thy voice, and to do whatever Thou wilt require of me. Grant me a true understanding of the folly of the cross, and let me be happy to endure with, and for love of, Thee the contempt, derision, and injustice of men, that Thou mayest recognize in me Thy true disciple.

Resolution: I will accept reprimands gratefully and not yield to sensitiveness, even should the reproof be undeserved.

Spiritual Bouquet: "If I desire to please others, I cannot be a servant of Christ."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR SATURDAY

BARABBAS IS PREFERRED TO JESUS

"And Pilate calling together the chief priests and the magistrates, and the people, said to them: 'You have presented unto me this Man—and behold, I having examined Him find no cause in this Man, in those things wherein you accuse Him—nor Herod neither. But you have a custom that I should release one unto you at the

Pasch; will you, therefore, that I release unto you the King of the Jews or Barabbas?' Then cried they all again, saying: 'Not this Man, but Barabbas' " (Luke 23, 13-15) (John 18, 39-40).

First Prelude: With tenderest compassion and profound reverence, behold Jesus, standing silently before the populace, who desire His death and prefer to Him a vile criminal.

Second Prelude: My Blessed Saviour, give me grace to love Thee with a true and constant love, that I may prefer Thy Divine pleasure to creatures and to my natural tendencies.

First Point

THE AFFRONT OFFERED JESUS

Behold my soul, thy Saviour and King, thy Bridegroom standing before the populace. His Sacred Countenance, though disfigured by painful blows and spittle, is full of majesty. His lips are silent, His Heart prays, offering Himself to the heavenly Father as a Victim of purest love. Pilate had repeatedly told the Jews that he found no cause to condemn Jesus, but swayed by the impetuosity of the high-priests in demanding His death, he sought for a means of liberating the innocent One without incurring the displeasure of the Jews! It being customary at the Pasch to set free one of the prisoners which they would choose, he gave them the choice between Jesus and Barabbas, the greatest criminal, who was then in prison.

Oh, the unspeakable love of God, Who gave His only begotten Son to redeem the servant! Barabbas, the malefactor and criminal is a picture of sinners, who by every sin rebel against God, the Supreme Lord. By mortal sin every sinner murders his own soul, and not seldom by his

bad example the souls of many others. We, too, as often as we commit sin are guilty of robbery in the presence of the Most High, particularly by abusing God's gifts in order to offend Him.

Let us ponder this unparalleled humiliation of our dear Lord. He, the Son of the Most High, to Whom is given all power in heaven and on earth, must see a vile creature, not only placed on a level with Him, but in unpardonable blindness, even preferred to Him. Ah, believing in such an awful mystery, must I not be pierced with compunction and love! What should ever have become of me had not Jesus in unspeakable love, abased Himself so profoundly? Let us dwell on this thought a moment and thank Jesus for His infinite compassion which redeemed us from everlasting death, and restored to us the liberty of the children of God.

We must further rejoice that by embracing cheerfully the sacrifices inseparable from our sublime vocation, we have a means of immolating to Him in return our life, which He bought for us at such a dear rate. Which sacrifice would Jesus have me make today as a slight return for His infinite love?

Second Point

THE SIN OF THE BLINDED POPULACE

A few days ago, on Palm Sunday, the same people, beside themselves with joy and exultation and waving olive branches had cheered our Lord with the "Hosanna," desirous of making Him their King. And now—oh, the instability of human kind! the same people even prefer to Him the vilest criminal, and with a wild impetuosity clamor for the ransom of Barabbas. Should we not justly

despise the judgments of men, and with unflinching fidelity serve God, Whose love alone is unchangeable? How often, alas, do we resemble the Jews by our instability and inconstancy! How often have we suffered idleness, lack of mortification, or sinful affections to deter us from the once recognized good. Have we not during the time of meditation clearly discerned the holy Will of God and the necessity of self-restraint? We promised obedience to His holy inspirations, but, how soon were we moved by difficulty or mere human respect to prefer the gratification of our natural tendencies to the honor of God and our true welfare!

O my Divine Saviour, with true compunction I humbly confess that I have grieved Thy Sacred Heart by my instability and inconstancy. I have renewed the pain Thou didst feel at sight of the ungrateful people. Give me grace to repair my past infidelity by redoubled zeal in the practice of virtue.

Affections: O Spotless Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, how incomprehensible was the shame heaped upon Thee when Pilate dared to compare Thee, the infinite Sanctity and Majesty, with Barabbas, the most wretched of criminals! Yet how much greater was Thy abasement when the whole people preferred him to Thee! Thus, my dear Saviour, to restore fallen man to the image of His Creator Thou wouldst suffer such abasement. Thus Thou wouldst, likewise, atone for my ingratitude, my folly, and faithlessness in esteeming the sweet yoke of Thy love but lightly and choosing rather what might effect my destruction. Pardon my blindness and infidelity, O Jesus. I renounce all affection for creatures, that I may possess Thee alone. Thou shalt henceforth, be the sole object of my love.

Resolution: In all my actions, I will be prompted by the desire to please God alone.

Spiritual Bouquet: "You are not your own for you are bought with a great price (I Cor. 6, 19-30).

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

THE FIRST MIRACULOUS MULTIPLICATION OF LOAVES

"When Jesus therefore had lifted up His eyes, and seen that a very great multitude cometh to Him, He said to Philip: 'Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?' And this He said to try him; for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him: 'Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little.' One of His disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, saith to Him: 'There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves and two fishes: but what are these among so many?' Then Jesus said: 'Make the men sit down.' Now there was much grass in the place. The men therefore sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves: and when He had given thanks, He distributed to them that were sat down, in like manner also the fishes, as much as they would" (John 6, 5-11).

First Prelude: Behold the Apostles distributing the miraculously multiplied bread to the people.

Second Prelude: Beg for grace to understand ever better the sentiments of the Sacred Heart that your heart may become more and more like to this Divine Heart.

First Point

OUR DIVINE SAVIOUR

Exhausted by a long missionary tour, the Apostles returned to our Blessed Lord on the shores of Lake Genesareth. Though very much in need of rest and relaxation, they could find neither. Accordingly Jesus, likewise in need of rest, entered a boat and put across the lake, to a desert-place, there to rest awhile. Contemplate the loving solicitude of Jesus for His own. He is the same loving Saviour even today. We can, therefore, revert to Him with implicit trust and confidence in our needs, both of body and of soul. Jesus teaches us further that a reasonable care for our health and for our temporal welfare is by no means sinful, on the contrary, in accordance with the Will of God. Without recreation and relaxation, it will be impossible for us to discharge our duties successfully for any length of time. Jesus, however, found the desired rest neither for Himself nor for His Apostles. Soon Jesus saw Himself surrounded by an immense concourse of people, eager to hear His doctrine. At sight of them, He forgot His exhaustion. Having healed the sick among them, Jesus seated Himself on an elevation and spoke to the people of the Kingdom of God. Thus time wore on, the day was nigh spent, and still they listened eagerly to the words of the Divine Teacher. In their eagerness to hear the Word of God, the multitude had forgotten to provide for their bodily wants. Touched by the devotion of these simple folk, Jesus wrought the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. What a glorious manifestation of the love and goodness of Jesus!

At sight of the poor people, He forgot His own

needs. He did not send them away, promising them future attention, but began presently to announce His doctrine to them.

The same zeal for souls animates Jesus even at the present day. Yes, He is far more concerned in my own salvation than I, myself. How consoling and encouraging the thought! With what confidence dare I reveal my wants to Him, and with what assurance, expect aid and succor! Am I conscious of the eagerness with which Jesus desires my salvation? How does my care and solicitude for my salvation harmonize with this consciousness?

Second Point

THE APOSTLES

The Apostles had crossed the lake to find on the opposite shore much-needed rest, but found instead of rest new work awaiting them. They did not, however, become indignant, for they had the needs of the people at heart, but in deep sympathy they rather pleaded with their Divine Master to dismiss the people that they could buy themselves something to eat. We are religious, consecrated to the works of mercy. Shall this be a mere empty name? That it may not be so, we must manifest a genuine, heartfelt sympathy with the ignorant, the poor, the sick and the orphans, and all who may have been confided to our care. To this end we must endeavor to understand our charges, study their needs, their dispositions and imagine ourselves needy and suffering in their stead.

The Apostles, however, not only sympathized with the people, but volunteered to render actual assistance. St. Matthew (14, 15, 16) relates that when they asked our Lord to dismiss the multitude, He said: "They have no

need to go, give you them to eat." He concealed His intention of working a miracle to try His Apostles, who were ready to assist, even to buy food and distribute it as alms. The five loaves and the fishes that were on hand they gave to others; for themselves and the Master they kept nothing. Jesus then ordered the Apostles to arrange the people in groups. Believing that Jesus would bring relief miraculously they obeyed, and their confidence was not deceived. The Lord multiplied the loaves and the fishes miraculously so that all the people were satiated.

What a beautiful example is the conduct of the Apostles for religious, who, for the love of God have devoted themselves to the service of their suffering neighbor. It is not indeed a rare occurrence to find religious enduring great privations, abstaining even from necessaries to be able to hold a mother's place in regard of an orphan, or to be able to give more liberally to the poor. Who can count the many sacrifices, great and small, which are practiced day in, day out, cheerfully by so many religious in the service of disinterested and unselfish charity!

Am I among the number of self-sacrificing religious, or do I artfully shrink from works of charity requiring extraordinary sacrifices? Do I deserve reproach in this regard, and what must I correct?

Affections: O Jesus, King of hearts! How infinite is Thy goodness, how unbounded Thy power! How gladly dost Thou exercise both in favor of those who forget all to follow Thee! Am I not far happier than the multitude who followed Thee and for whom Thou didst work so great a miracle? Thou dost not nourish me with only perishable bread, but with the Bread of Eternal Life. May my fervor in preparing for Holy Communion rival the fervor of the multitudes who followed Thee in the

desert! May thy chosen spouses never be wanting in gratitude for Thy boundless love! May we all be devoted to Thy Divine Heart with perfect trust and unselfish love, and thus be made worthy to win souls for Thee.

Resolution: I will practice true charity toward those in my charge, and manifest heartfelt sympathy with their sufferings and their needs.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Thou openest Thy hand, O Lord, and fillest all living things with blessings."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR MONDAY

THE PEOPLE DESIRE THE DEATH OF JESUS BY CRUCIFIXION

"Pilate saith to them: 'What shall I do then with Jesus, that is called Christ?' They say all: 'Let Him be crucified!' The governor said to them: 'Why what evil hath He done?' But they cried out the more, saying, 'Let Him be crucified?' " (Matt. 27, 22, 23).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus before the tribunal of Pilate, and the multitude clamoring for His death.

Second Prelude: Give me the grace, O my Saviour, for love of Thee to work out my sanctification with energy and determination, and to lead a crucified life.

First Point

THE INTERROGATION OF PILATE

From the question of Pilate, "What shall I do then with Jesus?" (Matt. 27, 23) we infer the baseness, the half-heartedness and indetermination of this godless

judge. Having declared Jesus innocent, he knew exactly what he should do, but, nevertheless, he sought counsel with the furious enemies of the One innocently accused. Had he heeded the pressing petitions of his wife, who sent him a messenger, saying: "Have nothing to do with that just Man" (Matt. 27, 19), he would not have committed such a crying injustice. How many are there today who imitate the conduct of Pilate! How many vacillating, weak natures! What half-heartedness even in the actions and omissions of such as have chosen the state of perfection! The commandments of God and of the Church, the counsels and admonitions imparted in sermons, the advice of well-meaning friends, leave them no doubt as to what to do, and still they act contrary to their knowledge. Religious can entertain no doubt as to what God requires of them, since their rules and statutes specify their duty for every minute of the day. Unfortunately there are those who consult neither their conscience nor fervent religious for advice, but who imitate the example of the tepid and the unfaithful. How will such souls justify themselves before God, Who has so clearly marked out their duties?

Let us, therefore, recognize the necessity of surrendering ourselves wholly to God! Let us pray for the grace to be preserved from all indecision, which is so dangerous to progress in perfection. Am I animated by the courage and determination that was mine on the day I entered religion?

Second Point

THE ANSWER OF THE POPULACE

Hear the wild cries of the people, who in their blind impetuosity, without the least deliberation, desire the

crucifixion of Jesus. "Away with Him, crucify Him" (John 19, 15), cries the populace, goaded on by the priests and elders. Jesus must be crucified, the honor of the heavenly Father wills it, our salvation requires it; Jesus Himself has prophesied it; it was foretold by the Prophets and recorded in the Sacred Books. If Jesus must be crucified, is it not meet that the Christian, the scholar and disciple, should also be crucified, that he may bear resemblance to his Divine Teacher? If the most holy and innocent One suffers Himself to be nailed to the cross, may the sinner, laden with guilt, renounce the cross? Must not religious, who profess to be in a particular manner followers of Christ, above all, lead a crucified life? The spiritual Fathers significantly liken the religious vows to the nails of the cross, saying that the spouse of Christ should by them be nailed to the cross in imitation of her Bridegroom. And in truth, is not the desire for earthly goods, so deep-rooted in the human breast, crucified by voluntary poverty? What sacrifices must religious make to keep the vow of chastity in all its splendor, and how must self-love be crucified incessantly, by our submission to the yoke of obedience! Still, how happy are we when in such manner we are crucified to the world and to self!

Do I bear in mind that the honor of God, my salvation, and the welfare of my neighbor demand of me a crucified life? How do I fulfill this obligation?

Affections: O Saviour of the world, to what shame and bitterness have my sins reduced Thee! To what anxiety and sorrow! They are the cause of Thy death. Oh, vouchsafe me Thy almighty grace, that my sins may be nailed to the cross with Thee according to the words of the Apostle: "Our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin may be destroyed" (Rom, 6, 6). How long

yet, O Jesus, will I contemplate Thy sufferings before my heart, wounded by Thy love, will die to self, to live henceforth for Thee alone, my God and my All!

Resolution: Today I will seize every opportunity to mortify my evil inclinations and especially to repress self-will.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Lord, let me die to myself, that I may live for Thee."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR TUESDAY

PILATE AGAIN DECLARES JESUS INNOCENT

"And he said to them the third time: 'Why, what evil hath this man done? I find not cause of death in Him. I will chastise Him therefore and let Him go' " (Luke 23, 22).

First Prelude: Behold our beloved Saviour standing in silence before the unjust judge, who declares Him innocent, nevertheless, orders Him to be scourged.

Second Prelude: Grant me the grace, O my Jesus, with love and patience to overcome the contradictions that oppose my good resolutions.

First Point

THE QUESTION OF PILATE: "WHAT EVIL HATH HE DONE?"

To Pilate's question: "What evil hath He done?" the enemies of our Lord could make no answer, because He had done no harm, on the contrary, had lavished upon them countless favors. Though they refused to recognize

Him as the Son of God, as the promised Messiah, they must at least have recognized Him as a just, a perfect man, a saint, their greatest benefactor. They should have testified to the fact that He had healed their sick and infirm, restored speech to the dumb, cleansed their lepers, raised the dead to life, consoled and strengthened all through His holy doctrine, and nourished them with a miraculous bread. In profoundest sympathy, let us penetrate the mystery of the innocence of Jesus, and hear Him address the plaintive words to the multitude: "O my people, what have I done unto thee, or in what have I offended thee? Answer Me!"

Jesus was innocent. He was Innocence and Sanctity itself; we, however, have done much evil as we daily confess in all justice. The heavenly Father burdened His Son with the sins of the whole world. Such is the divine secret which the prophets had announced, the mystery which the world will not comprehend. We, however, who understand it, will deem it an honor in union with our dear Saviour to bear an undeserved insult, like Him, to be condemned innocently. Am I always ready when Jesus would rivet me closer to Himself by permitting trials to come upon me, to purify my soul and to advance me in perfection?

Second Point

THE WORDS OF PILATE: "I WILL CHASTISE HIM, THEREFORE, AND LET HIM GO"

Not one actual misdeed had been laid to Christ's charge, only doubtful accusations had been advanced without reason or proof. On what ground should He be scourged? Consider how the governor's fear of the people made him contradict his better convictions. For

the third time he solemnly declared Jesus innocent and nevertheless condemned Him to be cruelly and shamefully scourged. Pilate wished to spare Jesus but without displeasing the Jews, and hoped to arouse their sympathy by the cruel scourging. What danger lurks in the attempt to please both God and the world! Although Pilate esteemed Jesus and thought highly of Him, he had not the courage to free Him, but submitted Him to the most cruel punishment. Human respect made him a persecutor of our Lord. How many resemble Pilate! They serve God so long as the world favors them; so long as such service would seem to flatter self-love, self-will and vanity. If God, on the contrary, deprives them of consolation in prayer, they neglect it; if the world makes demands on them, they turn from God, or at least divide their hearts between Him and creatures. Like Pilate, they entangle themselves in the greatest contradictions and requite with black ingratitude the goodness of their Saviour, Who constantly overwhelms them with countless graces and benefits.

How is my love of Jesus constituted? Am I ready to renounce all, to sacrifice all rather than offend Him?

Affections: O my Jesus, Thou hadst done only good, and overwhelmed us all with benefits, and yet Thou must immolate Thyself for love of us. What gratitude do I owe Thee for such love! And yet, with what coldness and indifference have I requited Thy love. Alas, I have done little good, but much evil. I deserve the punishment that Thou, O my Saviour, so unjustly didst take upon Thyself. In profound humility and confusion, I confess that I have well deserved all the sufferings Thou sendest me and far greater ones. I will deem myself happy in being permitted to suffer patiently little things for love of Thee. Strengthen me by Thy saving grace.

Resolution: I will be humbly silent in reverses that I may be vouchsafed the grace to overcome the obstacles to my perfection.

Spiritual Bouquet: "He threatened not when suffering, but gave Himself up to him who condemned Him unjustly."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR WEDNESDAY

THE SCOURGING AT THE PILLAR

"Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him" (John 19, 1).

First Prelude: Behold the inner court of the house of Pilate, and the pillar of the scourging to which Jesus was bound.

Second Prelude: Grant, O Jesus, that the contemplation of Thy sufferings may awaken in me a true interior sorrow for my sins that I may suffer willingly for love of Thee.

First Point

THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS IN THE SCOURGING

The scourging of our Divine Saviour was administered by Roman soldiers, consequently after the custom of the Romans and not of the Jews. With the Romans, however, scourging was regarded as an inhumanly cruel and degrading punishment, and to such a chastisement the Saviour, Whose innocence had been solemnly declared, was subjected. How painful for Jesus! This form of chas-

tisement was employed with the Romans only in the case of slaves—creatures who in those days were considered hardly deserving of the name of human beings, and who were regarded as the scum and the outcasts of human society. Thus our Divine Saviour was, as it were, placed on a level with the most despicable of His creatures. By enduring such martyrdom for us, Jesus offered an exceedingly great sacrifice of love and suffering. Oh, that we would contemplate the sacred mystery of Christ's humiliation with tenderest sympathy and grateful affection!

Let us contemplate the Holiest of the holy, shamefully stripped of His garments, trembling, bent with suffering, fastened to the pillar. He is mercilessly abandoned to the rude soldiers, who perpetrate inhuman cruelties and vent their malice on His sacred Body. In our suffering Saviour were literally verified the words: "The wicked have wrought upon my back; they have lengthened their iniquity" (Ps. 128, 3). Our Saviour writhes in silent agony under the cruel lash, and His sacred Body is, as it were, one great wound. His Precious Blood flows copiously to the ground. Who would not shudder at the mere thought of such inhuman cruelty! Oh, how profoundly has the Son of God abased Himself, and how excessively has He compassionated our misery! He takes upon Himself the misdeeds of men. The Lord atones for the transgressions of the servant.

If Innocence made such atonement, dare the culprit seek to evade the blows of justice? Sickness and divers miseries, anguish of soul and bodily pain, temptations, humiliations and desolation are the scourges with which God chastises us, and which often hurt us to the quick, though dealt by our loving Father's hand. But the soul, contemplating her scourged and lacerated Saviour, finds

in Him her comfort and support, encouragement and hope. She accepts these chastisements not only willingly, but imposes upon her flesh voluntary mortifications, the more easily to subdue her evil inclinations and to make at least some return for Christ's infinite love.

Do I think it possible to curb the flesh, without inflicting pain upon the body? Must I not, with St. Paul (1 Cor. 9, 27), chastise my flesh to bring it into subjection?

Second Point

WHY JESUS WILLED TO SUFFER THE CRUEL SCOURGING

Theologians assert that a single drop of the Precious Blood of the God-Man would have sufficed to redeem the whole world. Why, then, did our Lord endure such untold sufferings? Why, bear such agony and shame? The love of Jesus to His Heavenly Father was infinite, and could be satisfied only by the highest vicarious sacrifice. Accordingly, Jesus felt Himself strongly impelled to suffer even the most excruciating pains. But also for love of us He willed to suffer such an excess of pain. He would be our Exemplar in the sorrows that might break in upon us; He would be our strength and support, so that even amid the greatest tribulations we should be forced to exclaim: "My Jesus has suffered infinitely more." Furthermore, through this mystery of mercy, Jesus wished to incite in us implicit trust and confidence in His love. What dare we not expect from Him Who, urged by such an excess of love, suffered Himself to be thus ill-treated, in order to reopen Heaven for us? Must not the magnanimous love of Jesus move us to make a grateful return of love? Should we not consecrate to

His service all our energies, our thoughts, our words, our actions, our sufferings, our very life? Let us love Him with the love that animated the saints.

When the Apostles had been scourged, we read in Holy Scripture, they went away rejoicing that they had been found worthy to suffer for the love of Christ. Paul gloried in having been scourged eight times, and all without exception eagerly sought to suffer with Jesus, and with Him to atone for their sins and for those of the whole world. We, too, will resolve anew to suffer willingly for Jesus, renounce lawful pleasures and personal comfort, patiently endure the discomforts and hardships often met with in the service of charity. What sentiments sway my heart when I contemplate my Saviour, scourged at the pillar? Do I not deserve reproach?

Affections: My Jesus, how exceedingly great was the sacrifice Thou didst make to Thy Father for my salvation! Who could count the wounds inflicted upon Thee, Thou meekest Lamb of God, by the cruel scourging! What infinite love must have filled Thy Sacred Heart, when Thou didst will to bear such pain to merit pardon for me and for all sinners! Never can we fully appreciate the love of Thy merciful Heart. When I contemplate Thee, O Jesus, at the pillar of scourging, can any sacrifice Thou askest of me be too great? O my loving Saviour, Thou hast loved me and delivered Thyself for me! Give me grace to immolate myself incessantly by constant labor and mortification, as a living holocaust to Thy love.

Resolution: In all bodily and spiritual sufferings I will contemplate Jesus, scourged at the pillar.

Spiritual Bouquet: "He was wounded for our iniquities, and bruised for our sins."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR THURSDAY

THE CROWNING WITH THORNS

"And stripping Him, they put a scarlet cloak about Him. And platting a crown of thorns, they put it upon His Head and a reed in His right hand. And bowing the knee before Him, they mocked Him, saying: 'Hail, King of Jews'" (Matt. 27, 28-29).

First Prelude: Again, in spirit, enter the inner court of the House of Pilate; the rude soldiers in derision clothe Jesus with a purple cloak and crown Him with thorns.

Second Prelude: By Thy inexpressible love, O Jesus, grant me the grace to conquer pride, sensitiveness and self-love.

First Point

THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS IN THE CROWNING WITH THORNS

This sacred mystery of the love of our Blessed Redeemer, proves to us more emphatically even than the scourging, His insatiable desire to suffer for us. It is well-nigh impossible to believe that human malice could go to such extremes and devise such a cruel torture. Oh, the pain that Jesus suffered when the crown of thorns pierced His sacred head, while blood filled His eyes and crimsoned His holy countenance. Must we not be moved to the most tender sympathy with the meek Lamb of God, at sight of these disreputable executioners, who forced the crown of thorns with violent blows upon His sacred head, the sharp thorns piercing the flesh and causing Him indescribable pain?

No less excruciating than His bodily pains, were the interior sufferings of our Divine Saviour in this mystery. Such inhuman cruelty was meted out to Jesus, such indignity heaped upon Him, solely to deride Him and ridicule His sacred doctrine. Thus His Heart, too, was satiated with opprobrium. Oh, excess of the love of my Saviour, who can ever fathom Thee! Let us admire this inexhaustible, untiring love. Were it possible for us ever to refuse our thorn-crowned King even the smallest portion of our heart, without incurring the just rebuke of the blackest ingratitude? Let us, then, love our most magnanimous Lord with our whole heart, our whole soul, and with all our mind.

Second Point

WHY JESUS WILLED TO BE CROWNED WITH THORNS

Our Divine Saviour willed to suffer the crowning with thorns in order to merit for us the crown of eternal glory. He willed also to teach us by His example that we ought not to be sensual, effeminate members under a thorn-crowned head. If, in the crowning with thorns, Christ suffered for our sins, must we not, likewise, do penance for our sins by the practice of self-denial? Jesus willed, in particular, by the most painful crowning with thorns to make superabundant satisfaction for the countless sins of thought. He expiated the pride of our first parents and their descendants; He atoned for the desire to rule, which sways the hearts of most men; He expiated the craving for praise and honor; He atoned for self-will, sensitiveness, vanity, egotism, all sinful, impure thoughts and desires.

O my soul, if ever again you feel tempted to sins of such nature, think of your thorn-crowned Saviour and of

the painful expiation that He took upon Himself for love of you, and be not so ungrateful as to press a fresh thorn into His sacred head. In hours of discouragement and trial, look upon the Saviour's crown of thorns and willingly unite your slight sufferings with the excessive pain inflicted on our Saviour by His crown of thorns.

Affections: Thou, my beloved Saviour, deservest not to wear the crown that wounded Thy sacred head so deeply; no, it is meet that I who have so often offended Thee should wear it. Thou didst will then, O Jesus, to atone for my sins, to redeem me from eternal pain. Thou wouldst teach me by Thy example what honor to seek in this world. Thy thorny crown, O Eternal King, is a crown of humility and compassion. It impresses upon me forcibly the duty of mortification and self-denial.

Grant, O merciful Saviour, by Thy infinite love, which urged Thee to suffer so much for me, that henceforth I think of nothing, desire nothing, and seek nothing but to love Thee with my whole heart, and daily to grow in this love.

Resolution: For the love of my Saviour crowned with thorns, I will carefully watch over my thoughts and at once suppress every movement of pride and sensitiveness.

Spiritual Bouquet: "And platting a crown of thorns, they put it on His Head."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR FRIDAY

JESUS CHRIST DERIDED IN HIS ROYAL DIGNITY

"And platting a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand. And bowing the knee before Him, they mocked Him, saying: 'Hail, King of the Jews.' And spitting upon Him, they took the reed and struck His Head" (Matt. 27, 29-30).

First Prelude: Behold Christ with the purple robe, the crown of thorns and the mock-scepter, with which the brutal soldiery derided His royal dignity.

Second Prelude: O Jesus, fill my heart with true compunction and shame at the thought of the ignominy and pain Thou didst suffer for my sins.

First Point

THE MARKS OF CHRIST'S ROYAL DIGNITY

"I am a King, but my kingdom is not of this world" (John 18, 36), Jesus had answered Pilate. Here is revealed the mystery of this Kingship, wholly different from that of earthly rulers. They are the recipients of a golden crown; the King of heaven and earth is crowned with thorns. Earthly monarchs are arrayed in gorgeous robes; an old, purple cloak is put in derision upon the shoulders of our heavenly King. Earthly kings bear a golden scepter, before which the people bow reverently, paying homage; Jesus, the King of kings, the Prince of rulers, is given a reed in His right hand in mockery. See the soldiers bending the knee before Him in malicious homage, saying: "Hail, King of the Jews!" Hear the

blasphemies uttered against the Son of God! Behold how Jesus suffers shame and contempt, receives a disgraceful blow and is spat upon! Ponder the unheard-of torments He suffers with inimitable meekness and patience. At such a price He purchased His royal dignity! Prostrate before Jesus with the myriad angels, we will profoundly adore Him as King of heaven and earth, in Whose name every knee shall bend. As often as we appear before Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament, we will render Him profound homage and make reparation for the blasphemies and the insults still heaped upon Him today.

Second Point

THE FRUITS OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS FOR HIMSELF AND HIS ELECT

In recognition of all the contempt and the disgrace which Jesus Christ endured to redress the insults offered the Divine Majesty, the heavenly Father prepared for Him an empire of majesty, of dignity, and of power. He gave Him dominion over all creatures, and the right, as Supreme Judge, to pronounce sentence upon them. The Son of the Eternal Word shall one day come as King of Glory, accompanied by His angels and saints. All those who have made Him the King of their hearts, observed His commandments, and proved loyal in the combat against His enemies, shall then participate in His glory. Countless martyrs of all ranks and nations, who with Him drank the chalice of suffering and found comfort, encouragement and perseverance through Him, now have Him for their King for all eternity.

Under His banner, likewise, fight all those whom He has chosen from all eternity to share His glory. Sup-

ported by the strength Jesus merited for us by His passion and encouraged by the greatness of our hope, we, too, shall find in the practice of mortification, of penance, of renunciation, in the exercise of humility, meekness and patience, and in the faithful discharge of the duties of our holy vocation, the grace to finish our course victoriously. What a pity it were, if in the wake of our thorn-crowned Bridegroom, we should refuse to suffer, and should complain on finding a few thorns in our path! Does my conscience testify that I have made Jesus King of my heart, and that I am perfectly submissive to Him?

Affections: Benediction, praise and adoration to Thee for all eternity, O King of everlasting Glory, Who in this life didst seek naught but sufferings, ignominy, and contempt! Ye holy angels, witnesses of the terrible torments and the grievous insults inflicted on your and our King, help us by your profound adoration, by your acts of praise and homage, to make satisfaction and reparation, and adequately to thank Him for such infinite love. O Heart of my King, satiated with an excess of abasement and contempt, imbue my heart with Thy sentiments. Give me grace to despise all vanity and pride, to tread self-love under foot, that resembling Thee, my kingly Leader, here in this life, I may be found worthy to love and praise Thee for all eternity in Thy heavenly kingdom.

Resolution: I will frequently thank Jesus for the derision He bore for my sake, and for love of Him, be zealous in the practice of humility and self-denial.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Praise, honor and adoration, be to Thee, our God and King for all eternity!"

Prayer: Jesus, my Lord, my King . . .

MEDITATION FOR SATURDAY

ECCE HOMO

"Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith to them: 'Behold, I bring Him forth unto you, that you may know that I find no cause in Him.' Jesus therefore came forth, bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment. And he saith to them: 'Behold the Man!' " (John 19, 4-5).

First Prelude: Behold our Blessed Lord, covered with blood and wounds, wearing the purple cloak and the crown of thorns, as He mounts the steps of the tribunal, exposed to the gaze of the multitude.

Second Prelude: O my Jesus, grant that the contemplation of Thy sufferings and humiliations may excite in my heart an ever-growing desire for Thy love, and strengthen me in all sufferings and trials.

First Point

THE WORDS OF PILATE: "BEHOLD THE MAN!"

We behold Jesus before Pilate in a most pitiable and shameful condition. His face is defiled with blood and bruised with blows. His lacerated Body is but a single wound. Wearing the crown of thorns and the purple cloak, and holding a reed in His right hand, Christ is truly the "Man of Sorrows," in Whom were verified the words of the prophet: "We have seen Him, despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrow" (Is. 53, 3). Infinitely loving and mild, though plunged in bitter grief and crushed by unspeakable torments, our Divine Saviour bears the penalty our sins have deserved. Imagine your-

self, my soul, in the midst of the frantic mob, face to face with the piteous sight of your patient Saviour, your Lord and King. To atone for sensuality, He is besprinkled with blood—to expiate our vanity, He is satiated with contempt and ridicule. Admire His gentleness and patience and ponder the infinite love which induced Him to suffer so much for us.

In Him, Whom Pilate presented to us saying: "Behold the Man!" we recognize the thrice holy God, the Joy of the angels, Whose praises they incessantly sing for all eternity. How fitting are the words of the Canticle: "Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see the King of Peace in the diadem, wherewith His mother crowned Him in the day of His espousals, and in the day of the joy of His heart" (Cant. 3, 11). Such then, my soul, is the Bridegroom Who would have thy love! Canst thou look into such a mirror of patience and self-effacement without being filled with confusion, and desiring earnestly to resemble Him?

Second Point

WE SHOULD PRESENT OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR TO THE HEAVENLY FATHER

To preserve us from everlasting death, our Blessed Saviour suffered such excessive torments and immolated Himself as Vicarious Sacrifice. Accordingly, we should frequently present our suffering, thorn-crowned Saviour to the heavenly Father, saying: Look upon the face of Thy Anointed, O God, and have mercy on us! Behold our Saviour become surety for us! Behold a God, made Man for us, behold Thy only begotten Son, in Whom Thou wert well pleased from all eternity! He has borne our infirmities and weakness, and suffered Himself to be

plunged into an abyss of humiliations! Thou knowest, O heavenly Father, what reduced Him to the pitiable state in which we now present Him to Thee! It was love that brought Him to such excess.

Let us often, especially at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, immolate to the heavenly Father His Divine Son in expiation of our sins, and let us take courage in the thought that Christ's Precious Blood cries to heaven for us, imploring mercy. In union with this Sacrifice of infinite worth we will offer the little sufferings that we meet in the service of God and of His poor, and bear in mind that it is our duty to imitate and, inasmuch as we can, to resemble Him. Oh, that our dear Lord might be able to present our souls, "washed in the Blood of the Lamb," to the heavenly Father, saying: Behold, My spouse, who in imitation of My example, lives a crucified life, who loves Me and spends herself for Me in the service of My suffering members. Has Jesus not a perfect right to expect such fidelity of us, whom He has flooded with graces? Let us be grateful to so good, so generous a Master, that we may trustingly and confidingly go forth to meet our beloved Bridegroom, when He shall come in His glory.

Affections: O humiliated and patient Lord, how unfathomable are the mysteries of Thy love! How can I sufficiently praise and extol Thee! What are my sentiments on beholding my Saviour suffering such torments? Can I behold this marvel of love and not be inflamed with an ardent desire to make some return? Must not my heart be filled with sorrow for my sins, which have thus horribly disfigured the comeliest, the holiest and most affable of the sons of men? Let me realize Thy infinite greatness, O my Jesus, that in this mirror of truth and holiness, I may know myself, and through this knowledge

and the co-operation with grace, let me die to self to live wholly for Thy love.

Resolution: I will frequently picture my thorn-crowned, derided Saviour to see whether I bear any resemblance to Him.

Spiritual Bouquet: Behold your Saviour! "Behold the Man!"

Prayer: Jesus, my Lord, my King . . .

MEDITATION FOR PASSION SUNDAY

JESUS SPEAKS OF TRUE HONOR

"Which of you shall convince Me of sin? If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe Me? He that is of God, heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God. The Jews therefore answered and said to Him: 'Do not we say well that Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?' Jesus answered: 'I have not a devil: but I honor my Father and you have dishonored Me' " (John 8, 46-50).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus in the Temple at Jerusalem and reverently hear His sacred words addressed to the assembled Jews.

Second Prelude: O Jesus, give me the grace always to have Thy greater honor in view.

First Point

"I SEEK NOT MY HONOR"

The Jews called Jesus a Samaritan, one possessed by the devil, but Jesus of Whom St. Peter said: "Who when He was reviled, did not revile" (1, 2, 23), answered calmly: "I have not a devil, but I honor My Father, and

you have dishonored Me. But I seek not My own glory; there is One that seeketh and judgeth" (John 8, 49-50). Must we not admire the humility of Jesus, which impelled Him to bear such an outrageous insult with invincible meekness? He answered solely because the honor of God was concerned! How different are often the sentiments and the words of those who call themselves His spouses! They have taken upon themselves the obligation to seek, not their own honor, but the glory of God; yet how often do their actions contradict their words. They seek the applause of men and gratification of self! If humiliations, reproofs, criticisms or failure discourage us—if we envy such as are more respected and esteemed than we—we cannot say with our heavenly Bridegroom: "I seek not my honor." Oh, let us learn to lean upon Him Who mercifully pardons the humble, and provides with paternal solicitude for those that immolate their own honor to him.

Second Point

"WHICH OF YOU SHALL CONVINCE ME OF SIN?"

The enemies of Jesus are not in a position to reply even one word to His question, "Which of you shall convince Me of sin?" The faithful on earth, the saints in heaven, whatever lives, moves, in short, all creation, must unceasingly confess: "Thou alone art holy: Thou alone art the Lord: Thou alone the Most High!" He is the Lamb of God Who for the sins of all mankind was put to death. He can call upon all to be witness: "Which of you shall convince Me of sin?" With the Psalmist we must admit: "If Thou wilt be mindful of our miseries, O Lord, who can subsist before Thee?" (Ps. 129, 3). A heavy guilt of sin rests upon us, our evil conscience and

many men testify against us. How necessary is it, therefore, that we endeavor to liquidate our guilt before departing this life. Let us now, while there is yet time, hear the admonitions of the Lord and correspond to His graces, that He may not conceal Himself from us as He did from the obdurate Jews. In all justice He deserted them because in their obstinacy and perversion they would neither accept His doctrine, nor acknowledge Him as the Messiah, in spite of the many miracles He had wrought. How far has not the chosen people, once so highly favored by heaven and singularly protected by God for a long time, finally come? Let us strive by humility and fidelity to avert our Lord's displeasure. Was I not often the cause of God's withdrawing His presence and leaving me in spiritual dryness, darkness and doubt?

Affections: O my Jesus, permit me not one day to hear from Thee the reproach of having sought my own honor and not Thine! Preserve me from such a misfortune, sure to come upon Thy unfaithful spouses. I will employ solely for Thy honor all the graces and gifts which Thou so generously hast bestowed on me. In all my thoughts, words, and actions, I will seek Thy divine pleasure. Live and reign in my heart, O Jesus, with all the power of Thy love. Blot out every stain of sin, every affection and love incompatible with Thy holy love. Grant that I may listen to Thy words with humility and reverence, and persevere to the end in Thy holy service, through the faithful discharge of my duties.

Resolution: In all my actions I will seek to please God alone.

Spiritual Bouquet: "I seek not My honor, but the honor of Him Who sent Me."

Prayer: Jesus, my Lord, my King.

MEDITATION FOR MONDAY

JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

"And Pilate, seeing that he prevailed nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, taking water washed his hands before the people saying: 'I am innocent of the blood of this Just Man; look you to it.' And the whole people answering said: 'His Blood be upon us and upon our children'" (Matt. 27, 24-25).

First Prelude: Picture Pilate seated on an elevated platform, surrounded by the surging masses. Behold our beloved Saviour Who delivers Himself up to him who unjustly condemns Him.

Second Prelude: O my Jesus, Who wert condemned to death to merit life for me, grant me the victory over all my passions.

First Point

THE CRY OF THE POPULACE: "HIS BLOOD BE UPON US"

Holy Scripture relates that Pilate, seeing the tumult steadily increasing, washed his hands before the whole people saying: "I am innocent of the blood of this just Man; look you to it." What grief must well-nigh have crushed the Heart of Jesus on hearing the terrible answer, full of malice and hatred, coming from the hearts of His ungrateful people. "His blood be upon us and upon our children!" A heathen judge fears to incur the anger of his gods by the condemnation of Jesus, and the adorers of the true God deliver themselves and their offspring to effect the unjust death warrant.

Let us repeat these words, but with wholly different

sentiments. The Precious Blood of our Saviour is the foundation and cause of our hope for eternal salvation. We know that we are not purchased with perishable gold and silver, but with the Precious Blood of the Lamb. Therefore, the children of God, in faith, confidence, and love, cry to this Blood: "Thy Precious Blood, O Jesus, flow upon us and redound to our eternal salvation." As often as we approach the tribunal of penance, assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the merits of the Precious Blood are applied to our souls. Oh, that it may not be lost in us! May we often consider at what price our souls have been purchased, that in a spirit of gratitude we may be moved to make any sacrifice for our sanctification. I pray so frequently: "Blood of Christ fill all my veins," and the Saviour answers my prayer when He enters my heart in Holy Communion. Do I strive to be worthy of such inexpressible love?

Second Point

PILATE PRONOUNCES THE DEATH WARRANT

Out of infinite love of us, Jesus suffers the unjust sentence to be passed upon Himself. He wills to die that we may rise from the death of sin to a life of grace, and through it attain eternal glory. Let us recognize here the unutterable love of the merciful Saviour, and seek to penetrate the sentiments that filled His Heart at the moment when He heard the unjust sentence.

The chosen people of God, whom He had prepared for His advent for well-nigh four thousand years through the patriarchs and prophets, solemnly renounced their Messiah. This so highly favored nation demanded for Him the most degrading and shameful manner of death.

No act of legal justice condemned Him to death; He was the victim of those who hated Him and who savagely and imperiously demanded His death.

Even now similar pain is inflicted upon Jesus by every grievous sin. What an insult, what ingratitude! Let us seek to make atonement by earnestly striving to die to sin, to live for Him alone and to foster His life in us. All the duties of our holy vocation, our Holy Rule, our vows, provided we keep them faithfully, inebriate us more and more with the spirit of Christ. How often is there opportunity by our prayers and acts of charity to aid souls, dead to grace, to regain a new life in Christ! Let us often ask ourselves whether or not we are ready for the love of Jesus gladly to suffer for others, patiently to bear their faults and imperfections and to alleviate their sufferings; whether or not we are willing, like Jesus, to immolate our life for the salvation of souls. On what occasions can I practice charity toward others, especially those in my care?

Affections: Thy Sacred Blood, O Jesus, come upon me and cleanse me of my sins and evil inclinations. May it inflame me with that holy love wherewith Thou hast loved me, and renew in me Thy divine image. O my beloved Saviour, by Thy perfect immolation, whereby Thou didst abandon Thyself to the caprice of Thy enemies and didst suffer Thyself to be unjustly condemned to the most ignominious death, grant me the grace to surrender myself forever, without reserve, to Thee, my God, to Thy wisdom, Thy power and Thy faithful love. Thy love alone shall henceforth live in me and control me, so that I can say in truth, with the Apostle of the Gentiles: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2, 20).

Resolution: I will strive energetically to control my

evil inclinations and gladly sacrifice self in the interest of my neighbor.

Spiritual Bouquet: "He delivered Himself to him who unjustly condemned Him."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR TUESDAY

JESUS CARRIES HIS CROSS

"They took Jesus and led Him forth. And he bore His cross" (John 19, 16-17).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus, laden with the heavy cross, advancing wearily and sinking several times under the burden.

Second Prelude: Grant me grace, O my beloved Saviour, to walk perseveringly in the way of sufferings and humiliations.

First Point

JESUS TAKES THE CROSS UPON HIS SHOULDERS

Having clothed Jesus again in His purple robe, which they had cruelly torn from His bruised Body, the soldiers fetched the cross whereon He willed to die, and cast it at His feet. With infinite love and profound humility, He embraced the heavy load, and laid it on His sacred shoulders which were so torn and lacerated by the inhuman scourging that they seemed one great wound. The sacred Blood streamed from every pore and marked the way that He walked. Much heavier than the weight of the cross was the enormity of the sins of the whole world, which Jesus had taken upon Himself and which

rendered the journey to Calvary exceedingly painful. St. Bonaventure said that our Saviour carried a two-fold cross, an interior and an exterior one. The exterior cross was that of sufferings and penance; the interior, that of mercy and compassion with sinners.

Let us consider that our sins were the real burden which so oppressed our Divine Saviour. We will, therefore, excite deep compunction and contrition for them and thank our Lord with all our heart for having taken upon Himself the heavy cross for love of us, to save us from eternal perdition. We will excite a lively desire to participate in His sufferings. This is what our Saviour expects of us. We should take the cross upon our shoulders and follow Him. Henceforth, like true children of God, we will carry it after the Saviour in resignation, in implicit trust and love, following in His footsteps, ever keeping our eternal destination in view. Love makes all things sweet and easy. With what sentiments do I carry my daily cross?

Second Point

JESUS FALLS BENEATH THE HEAVY WEIGHT OF THE CROSS

Jesus, unable to carry the heavy burden placed upon His shoulders, repeatedly sank to the ground beneath its weight. Exhausted unto death, He lay on the ground for our sake, stretched in the dust of the earth like a worm. Jesus willed by the merits of this fall to liberate us from human instability and to insure us the grace of perseverance. We succumb so easily to the reverses of daily life, become discouraged and hesitate when there is question of carrying a cross. We complain of the least misfortune and believe ourselves burdened with more than we are able

to carry. Oh, how does the example of our cross-laden Saviour put us to shame, Who though crushed to earth, always rises again and proceeds courageously! What a consolation in the thought that the Lord Himself has borne our weakness! His weakness is our strength, because in His merciful Heart we find grace to bear the burdens we shoulder for His sake. By His repeated painful prostrations, Jesus merited for us the grace to avoid sin.

Let us kneel beside our suffering, bleeding Saviour, repent of our frequent relapses, and promise betterment. Let us animate and quicken our confidence in His Divine Omnipotence which will vigorously support our least endeavors for virtue. Let us heed His counsel: "Watch and pray, lest you fall into temptation" (Mark 14, 38). What precautions should I take to guard against a fall?

Affections: O most affable Jesus, to what excess has Thy immeasurable love impelled Thee! I behold Thee, laden with the heavy cross, exhausted unto death, pale, ascending Mount Calvary. O holy cross, on which my Saviour, with so much love and inexpressible exhaustion, carried the heavy burden of my sins, I salute Thee and with tenderest gratitude reverently embrace Thee. For Thee, O Saviour of the world, Son of the Most High, the cross was an abasement; I, however, a miserable sinner, have deserved it. It will be honorable for me to carry the cross of affliction and renunciation and thus to follow perseveringly in Thy footsteps. Grant me the grace, O Jesus, to embrace my cross generously, mindful of the words: "And he that taketh not up his cross and followeth Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10, 38).

Resolution: If I find it difficult to make a sacrifice demanded of me, I will take courage in the thought that

Jesus has gone before and merited grace for me to follow in His footsteps.

Spiritual Bouquet: "If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR WEDNESDAY

OF OUR FOLLOWING JESUS ON THE WAY OF THE CROSS

"And as they led Him away, they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country; and they laid the cross on him to carry after Jesus. And there followed Him a great multitude of people, and of women, who bewailed and lamented Him" (Luke 23, 26-27).

First Prelude: In spirit follow your cross-laden Saviour through the streets of Jerusalem. Simon of Cyrene is forced to help Jesus carry His cross, and the women of Jerusalem compassionate the Saviour.

Second Prelude: Let me recognize, O my beloved Saviour, with what sentiments I should accompany Thee on the way to Calvary.

First Point

SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS CARRY THE CROSS

Covered with blood, with eyes cast down, the Saviour followed His inhuman executioners to Calvary. How great must have been the exhaustion and extreme weakness of Jesus when His enemies feared that He would not reach the place of punishment alive! Desiring to see Jesus expire on the cross, these miserable wretches compelled Simon of Cyrene to help Him carry His cross.

How must it have pained our beloved Saviour to see not one of His disciples, not one of the many friends whom He had cured and overloaded with favors, ready to confer such a service upon Him, but that a stranger had to be forced to it! At first Simon strove against the honor imposed upon him, considering it an indignity, but soon he was seized with compassion for the Divine Sufferer, and from that moment carried the cross joyfully. Yet, how blessed and meritorious was Simon's portion in our Blessed Saviour's cross! For all eternity he will rejoice and give thanks to God for the inestimable grace of having been chosen to carry His cross, through a special dispensation of Divine Providence.

Nothing happens in our life by chance; the loving hand of our heavenly Father directs all things for our good, and frequently utilizes crosses and reverses as channels of the greatest spiritual benefits. Should not love of Jesus inspire us with the desire to confer upon our suffering Saviour a similar favor? Who suffers for love of Jesus, assists Him as did Simon. Those especially render Him such a service of charity who serve Jesus in His poor and His little ones by assisting them to carry meritoriously the cross of poverty, privations, and every form of human affliction. If the cross of our vocation should seem to weigh heavily upon us, let us bear in mind the reward which the Lord will one day bestow upon all who in very deed were to Christ a Simon of Cyrene, by supporting Him in their suffering fellow-men. Note the beautiful words of the "Imitation": "If thou carry the cross willingly, it will carry thee,—In the cross is salvation; in the cross is life; in the cross is protection from enemies. In the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness; in the cross is strength of mind; in the cross is joy of spirit; in the

cross is height of virtue; in the cross is perfection of sanctity" (Bk. 2, Ch. 12).

Second Point

THE COMPASSION OF THE PIOUS WOMEN

In the vast crowd following Jesus, there were none who compassionated Him. Finally a pious woman pressed through the throng, and fearing neither the violence of the brutal soldiers, nor the abusive words of the furious mob, handed our Blessed Lord a cloth to wipe the sweat from His sacred Brow. Nothing could deter her from showing compassion with her suffering Saviour. When she received back the cloth the sacred Face of Jesus was wonderfully imprinted on it.

The pious Veronica is the type of all religious who, urged by a self-annihilating love of their neighbor, walk the way of the cross to serve Jesus in His suffering members, to counsel and console them and to quicken their courage. They, too, may aspire to the reward of Veronica, for Jesus will imprint His sacred Image so indelibly on their hearts that the remembrance of Him will animate them to the most heroic sacrifices. Let us also consider the pious women who could not restrain their tears at sight of the torments and the humiliation of our Divine Lord. Their compassion was still imperfect, but the love of the Sacred Heart willed, nevertheless, to reward them for their tender pity, by exhorting them to prepare for the coming vengeance of Divine Justice upon Jerusalem, and to render their tears salutary for themselves by penance and contrition.

In His solicitude for others, Jesus again forgets Himself! We, on the contrary, occupied only with self, often

forget our obligations toward others, when sufferings and trials break in upon us. O Jesus, impress Thy sacred Image on my heart, that the remembrance of Thy love may induce me to be compassionate with my neighbor.

Affections: I thank Thee, O my beloved Saviour, for having called me in Thy infinite love to follow Thee more perfectly on the way of the cross, as it were, to enter into Thy footprints. Oh, that as Thy true spouse, I would carry the cross of poverty, humiliations, and renunciation and thus merit to have Thy sacred, suffering Image impressed indelibly upon my soul! O my Saviour, grant that my fidelity may sweeten the bitterness of Thy anguish, and let me share in all the graces Thou hast merited for us on Thy painful journey to Calvary.

Resolution: I will prove my gratitude for the inexpressible sufferings of Jesus, by courageous self-control, and by tender compassion with my fellow-religious and those entrusted to me.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Far be it from me to glory save in the cross of Christ."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR THURSDAY

JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

"And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary they crucified Him there, and the robbers, one on the right and the other on the left" (Luke 23, 33).

First Prelude: Behold Mount Calvary, our Divine Saviour, Who willingly extends Himself on the cross, and the executioners.

Second Prelude: O my Jesus, by the love with which Thou didst offer Thy sacred hands and feet to be cruelly pierced, strengthen me to bear all the hardships and trials met with in Thy holy service.

First Point

THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS IN THE CRUCIFIXION

Having reached the top of Calvary, the soldiers stripped our Divine Saviour of His garments, reopening His smarting wounds, and renewing the pain of the scourging. How painful must it have been to the Saviour to be thus cruelly stripped and shamefully exposed to the gaze of the multitude! Jesus raised His eyes to heaven and patiently awaited still greater torments. The sacrificial altar was prepared. The Innocent Victim obeyed without remonstrance, and compliant to the will of His executioners, stretched Himself willingly on the hard wood of the cross to die thereon for the sins of the world. His sacred hands and feet were extended violently and inhumanly nailed to the cross under the terrible blows of the hammer. The muscles contracted in consequence of undue nerve stimulation, and the sacred Blood streamed from the severed veins down the tree of the cross, moistening the ground.

Touched with love and compassion, let us contemplate the inexpressible sufferings of Jesus, His gaping wounds, His almost insupportable position in which the slightest movement must have aggravated His pain. Thus Jesus willed to suffer for our sins. Must we not be moved to the innermost depths of our soul when contemplating such sufferings? Must we not resolve to crucify our flesh by penance and mortification? For the love of Jesus, ought we not at least to accept the crosses imposed upon us by

our heavenly Father for our sanctification? Jesus suffered His members to be painfully extended in compliance with the will of His executioners, adjusted Himself to the wood of shame and suffering, but, in perverse self-will, we deem the cross that God has exactly fitted to our strength, too heavy, and imagine a lighter one better fitted to our shoulders. Oh, what little effort do we make to return the intense love of Jesus! How insignificant are our sufferings, our crosses when compared with the inexpressible agony of our dying Saviour on the cross! Lord Jesus show us what Thou wouldst have us suffer for Thee today, in gratitude for Thy incomprehensible love.

Second Point

THE LOVE JESUS MANIFESTED IN HIS SUFFERINGS

The love of Jesus for us is commensurate with the ineffable sacrifice of Calvary, for His immeasurable sufferings testify to a boundless love. Let us once more ponder who it is that loves us so incomprehensibly. It is Jesus, the Joy of angels, the well-beloved Son of the heavenly Father, true God and true Man. From the cross He cries to us: Behold, I have graven thee in My hands with bloody marks, I suffered them to be pierced that your guilty hands may not want the necessary strength for good works, that My strong hands may guide you on the dangerous journey through this life to your heavenly home. For love of you I suffered My feet to be pierced, to merit for you the grace to shun the paths of sin and to walk blamelessly in the way of the commandments and the evangelical counsels.

Let us give thanks to our dear Saviour, and extol His goodness, for such a lasting proof of His incomprehen-

sible, eternal love! At the same time, let us consider that it is meet for us to devote our hands willingly to the difficult tasks of our holy vocation, to raise them cheerfully to prayer after labor and fatigue, and thus to avail ourselves of at least the little opportunities of proving our love to Jesus crucified. Let us gladly bear the burden and heat of the day and spare no efforts to console our suffering Saviour in the person of the poor and the needy. He Who fails not to reward a cup of cold water, will count our steps; and the more we tire ourselves in His service here below, the more blissful will be our repose on His sacred Bosom for all eternity.

Affections: O my crucified Saviour, for love of me Thou endurest such excruciating torments. Can I ponder Thy crucifixion without being moved to the depths of my soul, without bursting into tears of compassion and love! I prostrate myself at Thy feet; I adore Thee, and extol the infinite love which prompted Thee to immolate Thyself for me. O sacred Victim of Atonement, render me worthy to participate in the precious fruits of the redemption. May the continual remembrance of Thy passion be for me a source of devotion, of love, of consolation and true compunction of heart. O my Jesus, by the painful wounds endured for love of me inflame my heart with the fire of Thy divine love as Thou didst inflame the hearts of Thy saints.

Resolution: I will immolate to my Saviour in a spirit of love whatever is repugnant and irksome in the discharge of my duties.

Spiritual Bouquet: "They have pierced My hands and My feet, and they have numbered all My bones" (Is. 21, 17-18).

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR FRIDAY

MARY AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His Mother, and His Mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas and Mary Magdalene" (John 19, 25).

First Prelude: Behold the Mother of Dolors standing beneath the cross, contemplating her beloved Son mid inexpressible anguish.

Second Prelude: O Queen of Martyrs, obtain for me the grace, through the virtues that I admire in thee, to sanctify all my sufferings and affections.

First Point

WHAT DID MARY SUFFER?

The prophet Jeremias had foretold that the martyrdom of Mary beneath the cross should be without its counterpart, when he said: "To what shall I compare thee, or to what shall I liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? To what shall I equal thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Sion? For great as the sea is thy destruction. Who shall heal thee?" (Lam. 2, 13). Though the martyrs endured great bodily torments, the unction of grace mitigated their sufferings. Mary's soul was afflicted, however, and her heart pierced by the sword of sorrow but no ray of consolation lightened her grief. Denied the comfort of offering Him the slightest alleviation, she beheld her only beloved Son die amid inexpressible torments. She heard Him complaining of thirst, and dared not offer Him the least refreshment. Her maternal heart, which, like none other on earth, beat in love for her Son, must have felt deeply the pain of sym-

pathy whose demands she durst not heed. As her love was immeasurable, so was her compassion.

Let us seek to penetrate the immensity of our Blessed Mother's anguish and pray with Holy Church: "Holy Mother, pierce me through; in my heart each wound renew of my Saviour, Crucified." Let us confess in all humility that our sins, the cause of the passion of Christ, were the cause of her martyrdom. Let us entreat Mary with all the ardor of our soul, by the merits of her sighs and tears, to obtain for us true contrition for sin. How gladly will this compassionate Mother apply to us the merits and fruits of the death of Jesus! How gladly will Mary assist us in the struggle against sin, and fortify us in the sorrows and tribulations of this mortal life, since for love of us she sacrificed her beloved Son!

Second Point

HOW DID MARY SUFFER?

Mary resigned herself to the cruel, ignominious death of her Son with wonderful conformity of her will to the Will of the heavenly Father. With heroic constancy she remained beneath the cross till Jesus had consummated His Sacrifice. Silently, without even one word of complaint, she endured all these torments, nor did she betray the least sign of impatience or depression. Though wholly immersed in grief, she stood near the cross without flinching, as the truly "valiant woman." She suffered all contempt and ridicule to come upon her, that with her Son she might drink the chalice of humiliation to the very dregs. Oh, that the Sorrowful Mother would obtain for us the grace to sanctify all our sufferings and pains by the sentiments imbibed from her holy example! Let us draw

from this meditation the spirit of immolation that makes us strong, generous, and persevering, and teaches us the holy art of bearing a cross silently.

Affections: O Mary, Queen of Martyrs and Mother of Mercy, I thank thee with my whole heart for the inexpressible anguish thou didst endure beside the cross of Thy Divine Son. For the salvation of my soul thou didst immolate thy beloved Son, Who was infinitely dearer to thee than life itself. Let me never forget thy great, heroic love. And yet, I am ashamed of my timidity and cowardice at sight of the cross! Divine love, which permeated thy heart and wounded it so deeply, gave thee the strength to bear such immense sufferings. Obtain for me a spark of this strong, magnanimous love, that in my slight sufferings I may persevere courageously with thee at the foot of the cross and consider participation in thy sufferings a source of honor and happiness.

Resolution: In all my sufferings and reverses I will beg the Sorrowful Mother to imbue me with her holy sentiments.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Heart transpierced with pain and woe, set my heart with love aglow."

Prayer: O most holy and afflicted Virgin Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR SATURDAY

THE SOLDIERS CAST LOT FOR THE GARMENTS OF JESUS

"The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified Him, took His garments (and they made four parts, to every soldier a part), and also His coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They

said then one to another: 'Let us not cut it, but let us cast lots for it, whose it shall be:' that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saying: 'They have parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture they have cast lots' " (John 19, 23-24).

First Prelude: Behold our Blessed Saviour, hanging on the cross, stripped of His garments.

Second Prelude: Lord Jesus, give me grace to disengage my heart from all earthly things and to give it wholly to Thee.

First Point

"THEY HAVE PARTED MY GARMENTS AMONG THEM"

Our Blessed Saviour had voiced the complaint through the prophet of old, that His garments should be parted and a lot cast upon His vesture. What grief must it have caused Christ's divinely loving Heart, elevated as He was, on the cross, to see the ruthless soldiers seize His garments, even before He expired! The soldiers were, in truth, ignorant of the infinite value of their treasure! Had they known these garments to be those of the Incarnate Son of God, the Saviour of the world, Whose mere touch had cured the sick, how they would have treasured and venerated them! St. John and the holy women were filled with grief to see these precious garments, "dyed with the Blood of the Lamb," fall into the hands of the godless soldiers.

What would not Mary have done, had it been permitted her to guard the adorable Blood of Christ against desecration! Without doubt, we owe it to the prayers of our Blessed Mother that the Saviour's garments were again restored to the friends of Jesus. To her prayers we owe the happiness and consolation of being able to be-

stow upon these blessed garments the veneration of our love and gratitude. But are not similar sufferings inflicted on our Divine Saviour even in our day? As of old, the Precious Blood clinging to Christ's garments was desecrated by godless hands, so now in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar His love is spurned with even greater malice and contempt. Christ's infinite love is requited with the blackest ingratitude by such as receive His sacred Body and Blood unworthily; by the godless, who ridicule and revile Him, and heap upon Him all manner of abuses and contempt. What a vast field for contemplation, for reparation and atonement is afforded us! Oh, that we could make fitting reparation and satisfaction to our Saviour's loving Heart! In union with Mary, the dispenser of the Blood of Christ, and with the friends of her Divine Son, let us offer this Precious Blood in expiation of the horrible crimes committed against the Divine Majesty. Let us resolve anew to honor this priceless Blood, the pledge of our salvation. Let us pray for those who reject Christ's saving Blood, the Divine price of our redemption. May our souls daily be sprinkled with the Blood of the God-Man, shed for us on Calvary.

Does love for our Blessed Saviour's priceless Blood impel me strongly to make some return for His infinite love, which spent itself to the last drops of Blood on the cross? Reparation, honor, adoration and thanksgiving be to the Blood of Jesus!

Second Point

WHY JESUS WILLED TO BE STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

It was the purpose of Christ's life on earth, but more particularly of His death, to teach us contempt of earthly

things. Hanging on the cross, He strips Himself of even the last remnant of worldly goods so as to die in the most abject poverty. He would merit grace for us that we may disengage our hearts from material things, renounce all excesses and be content with little. Our Blessed Saviour knew full well that the heart of man is captivated by affection for the vain goods of this world; that many offend God in order to enjoy fleeting earthly pleasures. In so far as we love worldly goods, we disrelish eternal, supernatural treasures. It is impossible for a heart attached to creatures to commune with God in fervent prayer, to love Him with a pure and undivided love.

Let us banish all attachment to creatures, which, at its best, is fraught with anxieties and cares. How peaceful and calm will be the death of those who have been content with little! Even before departing this life, they possess a wealth of heavenly treasures! In imitation of St. Teresa, let us divest ourselves of everything superfluous, and rejoice in being permitted to suffer privations for the love of God.

Affections: What a debt of gratitude do I owe Thee, my Jesus, for the sacrifice of infinite worth Thou didst make for my salvation! From the heights of Calvary, Thou didst see Thy sacred garments contemptuously falling a prey to the rude and vile rabble. Stripped of earthly goods, Thou wouldst depart this life in extreme poverty to make all men heirs to the rich inheritance of Thy Precious Blood. O give us, Thy spouses, grace to fathom the lesson of love Thou wouldst impart in this mystery. Teach us to love and keep our holy vow of poverty in its original lustre, that our hearts, disengaged from earthly ties, may be imbued with Thy holy love, and possess Thee, their sole treasure in time and for eternity.

Resolution: I will gladly renounce all earthly affections that I may be the better prepared to receive an abundance of divine grace and love.

Spiritual Bouquet: "They have parted My garments among them and upon My vesture they have cast lots."

Prayer: Take. O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR PALM SUNDAY

CHRIST'S TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

"And on the next day, a great multitude that was come to the festival day, when they had heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried: 'Hosanna, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel," (John 12, 12-13).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus entering Jerusalem triumphantly mid the shouts of acclamation of the multitudes.

Second Prelude: O King, meek and gentle, subject my heart wholly to Thee that Thou mayest take full possession of it in Holy Communion.

First Point

OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR AND THE APOSTLES IN THIS TRIUMPHAL PROCESSION

Our Blessed Lord, Who loved humility, Who had always fled splendor and renown, nevertheless willed, five days before His passion, to enter Jerusalem triumphantly and to accept the tokens of veneration bestowed upon Him so generously. Jesus entered upon His passion, not

only with patient resignation, but with a heroism truly triumphant, He embraced sufferings and the cross, to atone for our sins. A further cause of Christ's triumph was the fact that He would give us the greatest proofs of His love by the institution of the Blessed Eucharist and by His death on Calvary. Such were the causes of His exultation.

How unlike His sentiments are those of the disciples! Believing that now the time was come when their Master would found an earthly kingdom, whose princes they fondly hoped to be, they rejoiced to see their Master thus exalted. How far above our petty human conceptions are the adorable thoughts of God! The disciples of Christ have nothing to await in this life but crosses and sufferings. With our Blessed Saviour, they must shoulder tribulations and hardships, must renounce much that flatters their sensible appetites and, in imitation of Jesus, cheerfully accept sufferings and esteem them as a mark of honor and renown. Thus acted the martyrs, who went to death joyfully, as it were, to a nuptial feast. Should it be impossible for us to shoulder sufferings courageously because we often feel a strong desire to evade them, let us in all humility acknowledge our utter weakness and pray the Lord to give us a truly generous heart. What are my sentiments? Are they the sentiments of my Blessed Saviour, Who eagerly longs for His passion? Or, do I, like the Apostles, then still weak and timid, seek honors and sensible gratifications?

Second Point

ATTITUDE OF THE POPULACE

The joy and exultation of the populace at Christ's triumphal entry is symbolic of the dispositions with which

we should receive Him in Holy Communion. Has not the prophet said also to us: "Tell ye the daughter of Sion: Behold thy king cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass and a colt the foal of her that is used to the yoke" (Matt. 21, 5). Oh, that we recognized this King and the meekness and love with which He comes to us! Each one of us can truly say: Behold your King comes to you from heaven, to be your comfort, your help, your protection, but also your model and exemplar. Ah, not as did the people on that day of Christ's triumphal procession, but with all our hearts, we will cast ourselves at His feet and surrender ourselves to His love.

Let us immolate to Him even our evil habits, our disordered tendencies, all expressions of self-will, our natural affections, and we, too, will be permitted to join in the triumphal procession bearing the palm of victory, and with the children and the multitude, sing the "Hosanna" with all the ardor of a love-inflamed heart. Our Divine Saviour longs to enter our hearts in triumph, to rule therein without force or severity, solely by love and the sweet influence of His divine presence. Oh, that the very stones of our insufficiency and hardness of heart would proclaim His praises! Let us silence His opponents and enemies, self-love, pride, vanity—the vast array of our passions—that He may reign as King, Redeemer and Bridegroom. Oh, may we never in the least have any part with the inconstant populace, who so shortly after the triumphal entry proved unfaithful! In what does my preparation for Holy Communion consist? Do I consider a few prayers a sufficient preparation?

Affections: O Divine Redeemer, King of Eternal Glory, even before the combat Thou wouldst celebrate a glorious triumph, to teach us that Thou wert by no means

coerced to suffer, but didst go into death as to a feast of rejoicing, of Thy own free Will, for the honor of Thy Father and our salvation. Such was the power and might of Thy infinite love! Thou wouldst not enter Jerusalem in pomp and power, as an earthly monarch, but meek and gentle, as the Conqueror of sin and death, as the Prince of Peace, the Ruler of hearts, in which Thou wilt establish the kingdom of Thy mercy and grace. How good art Thou to the truly humble and obedient! How gladly dost Thou enter their hearts? Cleanse my heart, O Lord, of all sin and take from it every inordinate affection, that Thou canst fully possess it, and rule therein as Thou reignest in heaven and in the hearts of all the faithful on earth.

Resolution: I will frequently beg my Saviour to take full possession of my heart and impress on it His love of the cross.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR MONDAY

THE INSCRIPTION OF THE CROSS

"And Pilate wrote a title also, and he put it upon the cross. And the writing was: Jesus of Nazareth, The King of the Jews. And it was written in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin" (John 19, 19-20).

First Prelude: In spirit take your stand beneath the cross and read Pilate's inscription.

Second Prelude: O Jesus, my Lord and Saviour, teach me, by true humility of heart to subject myself to Thy benign sway.

First Point

THE WORDS: "JESUS OF NAZARETH"

By a singular providence of God, Pilate had affixed to the cross an inscription which he had dictated in three different languages, in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." By this inscription God willed to manifest the Messianic character of Christ's mission. Jesus hung on the cross as our Saviour and Redeemer. This appellation is truly a title of honor for our Blessed Lord. He had assumed it in the circumcision, had verified it during the course of His life in all His actions, healing all manner of infirmities and working other prodigies. Now that He hangs on the cross He declares Himself publicly in the face of the whole world as Jesus and Saviour, a name which is inexpressibly dear to Him and also to us. He purchased it at the price of His Precious Blood, and by means of it He bestows on mankind consolation, protection and help in all the needs of life and death. "Jesus of Nazareth," reads the inscription by which Jesus would announce to all that He is the Nazarene—that is, the Holy One, Who atoned not for personal guilt but for the sins of the world. This title, further, testified to His profound humility. He had assumed His human nature in Nazareth, had spent many years there in seclusion as lowly artisan. Nazareth was despised by the Jews and for that very reason the Saviour willed even on the cross, to be proclaimed "Jesus of Nazareth."

This superscription of the cross conveys a touching lesson deserving earnest consideration. Let us ask, first of all, whether we suffer Jesus full sway to exercise His office as Redeemer in our regard, and whether we en-

deavor to render ourselves worthy of the fruits of His passion. Let us bear in mind that purity of heart and humility are the channels through which Christ's superabundant merits will flow. These virtues, moreover, are incumbent upon us, in a particular manner, as religious, as spouses of Christ. Do I aim to resemble my Divine Model in loving to be esteemed as naught in the eyes of the world, or must I admit,—to my shame,—that I try to conceal my faults and display to advantage any possible good I may do?

Second Point

THE WORDS: "KING OF THE JEWS"

This inscription should indicate the cause of Christ's sentence. Pilate, who had lacked courage to uphold his authority against the excited multitude, now delighted to find occasion for avenging himself by writing on the tablet designed to publish the crime of which Jesus was found guilty besides "Jesus of Nazareth" also "King of the Jews."

The chosen people had rejected their King; by means of this superscription the heathen Judge must solemnly proclaim Him King of all those whom Christ, by His death on the cross, had redeemed from the slavery of Satan and united into one grand kingdom of God. All nations should adore Him. He should be at once, their King, their Judge and their Lord. None could dispute His scepter and crown. He is risen, the Apostle observes, to rule over the living and the dead, and daily we confess with Holy Church in the Creed "and of His Kingdom there shall be no end." He is the invisible Head of the Church, Who rules over all the faithful by the sweet reign of His grace. To Him, in His own words, is given all

power in heaven and on earth. Let us choose Him King of our heart and subject it to Him in humble obedience, abandoning ourselves wholly to Him in childlike trust. Let us rejoice in the honor accorded to the holy cross. This sacred symbol of our salvation towers high above our Churches; before it all peoples kneel in reverence; by the sign of the cross, Satan's power is crushed. Let us adore our mighty and yet so humble King, Who from the height of the cross rules the world.

Am I of the number of those who choose Christ their King, but who flee from His cross, His poverty, His abasement, and His sufferings?

Affections: Profoundly I adore Thee, O Jesus of Nazareth, my Saviour and Redeemer, Whose death is the source of our life, and tender Thee the homage of humble reverence and heartfelt gratitude. Thou art truly Heaven's King, the King of the humble and lowly, who turn to Thee by sincere compunction and penance, calling upon Thy holy name. Would that I could say that Thou art in truth the Ruler of my heart, that I have immolated all to Thee that I am and have! O my crucified Jesus, prostrate at Thy feet I pray Thee: Take possession of my heart and annihilate therein whatever is opposed to the power of Thy love. Conquer the hearts of all men, O divine King, that all may be subject to Thy sweet reign and one day be found worthy to enter the kingdom of Thy eternal love and glory.

Resolution: I will today render homage to my divine King by frequent acts of humility and adoration.

Spiritual Bouquet: "In the name of Jesus let every knee bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR TUESDAY

JESUS ON THE CROSS IS MOCKED AND PRAYS FOR HIS ENEMIES

"And they passed by, blaspheming Him, wagging their heads and saying: 'Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God and in three days dost rebuild it: save thy own self; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.' In like manner also the chief priests, with the scribes and ancients, mocking said: 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross and we will believe in Him' " (Matt. 27, 39-42).

First Prelude: Behold our Blessed Saviour on the cross, suffering the most excruciating torments, mocked and blasphemed by the passers-by.

Second Prelude: O Jesus, grant me grace to realize the baseness of human pride, to expiate which Thou didst will to suffer so much.

First Point

OUR BLESSED LORD ON THE CROSS, MOCKED AND BLASPHEMED

The more our Lord manifested the excess of His love, the more were His enemies urged to vent the excess of their malice and hatred upon Him. Enduring the most violent torments, He was reviled and mocked not only by the executioners, but also by the high priests and scribes, the populace and the soldiers. His sacred words were misinterpreted; He was reviled as having helped

others, but being unable to help Himself. They promised to believe in Him if He would come down from the cross. Oh, how painful to His Sacred Heart must have been such blasphemous, impious language! Jesus hung on the wood, tortured by inexpressible pain, at the point of the most excruciating death. While His Blood streamed from countless wounds, those malicious tongues pierced, as with poisoned arrows, His loving Heart. How painful, too, that the very words He had so often spoken for the benefit and consolation of human kind were now made the object of contempt and ridicule—that these souls, for whom He had shed His Blood, rejected the bountiful redemption!

For some time the reviling and blaspheming had continued, mockery had been added to mockery, and still the Lamb of God opened not His mouth, but observed a profound silence. Jesus consummated the work of the redemption. He drank the chalice of suffering to the very dregs; He descended not from the cross, but suffered as universal Victim for all, prayed as a sacrificial Priest for all. Oh, that we would realize the culpability of our pride, since to atone for it, Jesus had to endure ignominy, ridicule and contempt! Let us consider that, suffering on the cross, Jesus merited for us the grace to subjugate pride, and to resemble Him, our Lord and Master, in humility.

Do I perceive in my heart at least the desire to conform to the meek and loving Heart of Jesus satiated with opprobrium?

Second Point

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS ENEMIES

After a long silence, Jesus opened His blessed lips and spoke the ever memorable and tender words: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23, 34). He prayed for those that persecuted and reviled Him. Our Blessed Lord thus teaches us, not only by His words but more particularly by His example, that we should: "Do good to them that hate you and pray for them that calumniate and revile you" (Matt. 5, 44), His Precious Blood cries to heaven for vengeance, but His loving Heart cries out for pardon. Does not such generous love condemn the least bitterness that we might harbor against our neighbor! What are the offences that might be committed against us, when compared with the atrocities, the injustice heaped upon the Son of God, which Jesus, nevertheless, excused in His enemies when He said: "They know not what they do!" We, too, were the object of Christ's prayer, because every sinner is guilty of His death. Must not such a petition on the lips of the dying Saviour incite us to true compunction and inflame us with ardent love! Moreover, to what extent must not our confidence increase in a Saviour Who lovingly defends and justifies us when He might justly accuse and chastise? He remembers not our iniquities, not the gravity of our sins, but draws the attention of the heavenly Father to our weakness, to our thoughtlessness, to our ignorance. Let us thank Him from the bottom of our heart for such love, and, contritely and in all humility, acknowledge our guilt, that on the Day of Judgment Jesus may Himself be our vindication. When an opportunity presents itself, we, too, will lovingly excuse others, and

thus merit the special favor of God, and garner a rich harvest of heavenly gifts.

Am I of the number of those who seek to magnify the faults of others, or do I, according to the example of Jesus, try to find a reason for excusing at least the intention of the erring one?

Affections: O Blessed Saviour, what lessons Thou impartest to me from the height of the cross! Thou endurest the most excruciating pain in Thy whole Body, and at the same time Thy Sacred Heart is satiated with opprobrium. Oh, that I would never forget that it was my sins of pride, of vain-glory and ambition that imposed upon Thee, my beloved Saviour, such a heavy sacrifice of atonement. I behold Thee, O Jesus, accepting all the bitterness of the contempt, the reviling and the pains, in order to present to me the sweetness of Thy mercy and love. I pray Thee, let the sentiments of Thy Heart pass over into mine,—give me a truly humble and contrite heart, that I may be made worthy to participate in the blessed fruits of Thy prayer and learn of Thee to be patient and forbearing with others.

Resolution: To honor Jesus, mocked on the Cross, I will be humbly silent under reprimands, and according to His example, lovingly excuse the faults of others.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Prayer: Our Father . . .

MEDITATION FOR WEDNESDAY

THE LAST WORDS OF JESUS ON THE CROSS

"And afterwards, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said: 'I thirst.' Now there was a vessel set there full of vinegar. And they, putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, put it to His mouth. Jesus, therefore, when He had taken the vinegar, said: 'It is consummated' and bowing His head, He gave up the Ghost" (John 19, 28-30).

First Prelude: In spirit take your stand beneath the cross of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and with profound respect and love hear His sacred words.

Second Prelude: O my beloved Saviour, I pray Thee, implant deeply in my heart the sacred lessons that Thou wouldst teach me from the cross.

First Point

"MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?"

Suffering intense agony, Christ hangs upon the cross. Nowhere does He find refreshment or relief and, yet, in such exceeding agony He is mindful, in His infinite love, of the salvation of others. He prays for His executioners, promises paradise to the penitent thief, gives us His holy Mother, and consoles His beloved friends. Still, no one seems to think of Him. No one offers Him even a slight alleviation. He looks down to earth and finds Himself forsaken; He raises His eyes to heaven and thence, even, no aid is nigh. In His extreme death-struggle, Jesus cries

with a loud voice: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Oh, what must Mary's heart have suffered when she heard this cry of anguish from the lips of her dying Son! She comprehended better than anyone else the immensity and bitterness of the grief that Jesus would reveal to the whole world in that awful cry. He would make known the full measure of His inward and invisible pain and with it, the greatness of His love for us, together with His ardent desire to be loved by us in return. If we would, in some measure, realize the inexpressible benefit that Christ conferred upon us in this mystery of mercy, let us consider what it means to be forsaken by God. By our sins we have deserved to be rejected by Him for all eternity but by His extreme abandonment on the cross, Christ willed to preserve us from being totally abandoned by God forever. He merited, for sinners, the grace never to be wholly deserted by God during life. He, likewise, merited for us grace to bear trials and reverses, abandonment by creatures and apparent dereliction. Oh, what thanks do we owe Jesus for such love! With what fidelity must we serve Him in life, that we may not be forsaken by Him in the all-important and decisive hour of death! What is my conduct when I am forgotten by creatures, and when God also withdraws His sensible consolation?

Second Point

THE LAST WORDS OF JESUS

Having taken vinegar and gall, offered to Him in answer to His cry: "I thirst," Jesus said: "It is consummated." Oh, sublime word of my Saviour, glorious message of victory, that fills heaven with joy, earth with

peace, and hell with fear and trembling! How happy are we that Jesus has consummated our redemption! Now does the Blood of Jesus powerfully cry to heaven entreating pardon for us; the anger of the Eternal Father is appeased; justice has been transformed into mercy.

May we be able to say in our last hour: I have accomplished the Divine Will in my regard? With confiding trust we shall then be able to repeat that other word of Jesus, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Let us for a moment ponder the weight of the word, "It is consummated." Must we not tremble at the thought of our weakness, since we are so blind to understand and so slow to accomplish the Divine Will? Let us even now commend to the heavenly Father our utter blindness that He may enlighten us; our misery that He may relieve it. Let us implore Him to direct all things to His honor, that, according to the example of His divine Son, we may accomplish His Will in all things. May I be able to say with assurance at the close of each day: I have accomplished everything enjoined upon me by obedience.

Affections: O my beloved Saviour, Thou wilt empty to the very dregs the chalice of abasement and suffering offered Thee by Thy Father. To rescue me from hell, and to make me share in Thy heavenly bliss, Thou dost strip Thyself of all divine consolations, and plungest Thy soul into the abyss of the bitterest desolation. O sweetest Jesus, what sacrifices shall I, poor sinner, make in thanksgiving for such an incalculable benefit, such boundless love? Thou, O my Saviour, hast accomplished everything that could redound to the honor of Thy heavenly Father, and my sanctification. Permit me not to die without having achieved Thy merciful designs. Grant me a true hunger and thirst for Thy love and my perfection, that

when departing this life I can say with assurance: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

Resolution: I will perform all my actions in a spirit of love and obedience.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Father, into Thy hands, I commend my spirit."

Prayer: Our Father.

MEDITATION FOR HOLY THURSDAY

THE WASHING OF THE FEET AND INSTITUTION OF THE BLESSED EUCHARIST

"And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke and gave to His disciples, and said: 'Take ye and eat. This is My Body.' And taking the chalice, He gave thanks and gave to them, saying: 'Drink ye all of this. For this is My Blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins. And I say to you, I will not drink from henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it with you anew in the kingdom of My Father.' And a hymn being said, they went out unto Mount Olivet" (Matt. 26, 26-30).

First Prelude: In spirit enter the Cenacle, contemplate Jesus humbly washing the feet of His disciples, and hear from His adorable lips the sacred words which constitute the most wonderful proof of His infinite love.

Second Prelude: Give me grace, O Jesus, to understand Thy inexpressible love, that I may love Thee in return from the depths of my heart, and show my love for Thee by profound humility.

First Point

JESUS SETS US THE EXAMPLE OF THE MOST PROFOUND HUMILITY

What a touching spectacle,—Jesus kneeling down before His Apostles,—even before Judas,—and washing their feet! Consider, my soul, Who performs such a lowly service, usually imposed upon the meanest slaves and servants. The Incarnate God, the well-beloved Son of the heavenly Father, of whom St. John speaks on this occasion: "Knowing that the Father hath given Him all things into His hands and that He came from God and goeth to God" (John 13, 3), arises to wash the feet of His Apostles. With what reverence and devotion, with what astonishment may the angels, who assisted invisibly, have contemplated this affecting scene! We, too, will admire the most profound abasement of our Divine Saviour, and in spirit kneel at His feet, humbly acknowledging our unworthiness even to kiss those blessed hands, with which He washed the feet of His disciples. Like Mary Magdalene, let us offer Him our desire to lave His sacred feet with tears of compunction and love. Let us declare our readiness cheerfully to comply with His loving admonition to the disciples on this occasion: "If then I, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also" (John 13, 14-15).

Let us ponder, for a moment, such unspeakable condescension and love! Popes, kings and princes deem it an honor, by washing the feet of the poor, to enter into the footprints of their Lord and Saviour. What humiliation should ever find me wanting, when I see the thrice holy

God abasing Himself so profoundly in self-forgetting love? Holy Mother Church is glorified by countless religious orders, who make it their life-task to render the meanest services to the poor and the forsaken. In the humble offices of our holy vocation, let us ever again fix our eyes upon our Blessed Saviour and His lowly example, and seek to penetrate His loving sentiments. Humility and love render our heart acceptable to our Blessed Lord in Holy Communion. When Jesus washed the feet of His disciples before the institution of the Blessed Eucharist, did He not will to impress upon us that true humility and ardent love constitute the most fitting preparation for the heavenly Banquet? Dare I ever regard anything in the service of the Lord as lowly, when I behold my God and Saviour washing the feet of His disciples?

Second Point

JESUS GIVES US PROOFS OF THE GREATEST LOVE

Our Divine Saviour had said to His disciples: "Greater love than this hath no man than that he lay down His life for His friends" (John 15, 13). Such is the love Jesus bestowed upon us, yet that did not suffice for His infinitely loving heart! In His infinite wisdom, He found another, quite astonishing proof of His inexpressible love. He offered His life, to restore to us the life of grace. He gave us Himself in the Sacrament of His Love, to preserve and increase our supernatural life. In this sacred mystery He gave us all that He would give, wherefore St. John very aptly said: "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13, 1). Finally, the great moment had come for which He had so long prepared His disciples, of which

He had so often spoken, and which He now announced with the love-inflamed words: "With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you, before I suffer" (Luke 22, 15). Truly, the Eucharistic Banquet was worthy of the most ardent desire of the God-Man. Christ desired to eat It with His Apostles before His passion, that by union with Him they might be strengthened and prepared for sufferings. Hear his words: "This is My Body which is given for you" (Luke 22, 19). "This is My Blood which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins" (Matt. 26, 28).

Jesus thus offers Himself for the first time in an unbloody manner to the heavenly Father, and gives His sacred Body and priceless Blood to His disciples as nourishment. O love of my Jesus, O powerful, tender, generous, infinite love of my Saviour, nothing remains to Thee; Thou, O Jesus, hast loved us to the end. Thou hast instituted this adorable Sacrament to refresh our souls and to implant into our hearts the germ of immortality, which on the Day of Judgment shall unfold to the most glorious transfiguration of the body. How could it be possible for us not to desire Jesus, not to long for perfect union with Him in the Sacrament of His Love? Let us beseech Him to inflame our hearts with a grateful return of love, and to impress deeply therein the memory of His sacred passion, that we, too, will love to sacrifice ourselves in His service. Do I burn with a fiery ardor to be united with Jesus in Holy Communion? Am I animated with sentiments of humility and self-sacrificing charity, thus, in some measure, to requite His unbounded love?

Affections: O Divine Saviour, Who didst set me so wonderful an example in the washing of the feet of Thy

disciples,—by Thy infinite merits, by Thy Precious Blood, I pray Thee for the grace to be inflamed with Thy holy love and saturated with Thy saving Blood. By sincere humility, let me share in the infinite treasures which Thou hast reserved for the truly humble, in the Sacrament of Thy Love. Oh, that we could worthily thank Thee, O Jesus, for the infinitely precious treasure of the Blessed Eucharist! Couldst Thou give us anything more precious than Thyself? Who can fathom the depths of Thy love! I, too, my Saviour, will give Thee all that I am and have. Let my oblation be pleasing to Thee by intimate union with Thy sublime sacrifice in the adorable Sacrament of the Altar. "O loving Pelican! O Jesus Lord! Unclean I am, but cleanse me in Thy Blood."

Resolution: I will prepare my heart for Holy Communion by fervent acts of profound humility and ardent love.

Spiritual Bouquet: "With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer."

Prayer: Soul of Christ.

MEDITATION FOR GOOD FRIDAY

THE DEATH OF JESUS

"Jesus therefore, when He had taken the vinegar, said: 'It is consummated' and bowing His head, He gave up the Ghost" (John 19, 30).

First Prelude: In spirit ascend the heights of Calvary and reverently remain at the foot of the cross, whereon our Blessed Saviour, Jesus Christ, dies for love of us.

Second Prelude: O my crucified Saviour, Who didst die for love of me, grant that, through the merits of Thy

precious death, I may die to self, and live henceforth only in Thee and for Thee.

First Point

THE DEATH OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST

In the gospel narrative we read: "Having tasted the vinegar, He said: 'It is consummated' and thereupon He bowed His head and gave up the Ghost" (John 19, 30). Oh, marvelous death of the God-Man! The Saviour died of His own free will for love of us! For, though the torments He suffered were more than sufficient to deprive Him of life, nevertheless, death should have been powerless over Him Who holds in His hands the keys of life and death, had not love deprived Him of life. The prophet had foretold of Him: "He was offered because it was His own will, and He opened not His mouth; He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearer, and He shall not open His mouth" (Is. 53, 7). His death was a holocaust of the purest love, which He offered to His heavenly Father for our redemption. Contemplating our Divine Saviour on the cross, let us seek to penetrate His forgiving and merciful Heart, and we shall find therein nothing but love. Love took His very life away; His passion breathes love, speaks the language of love. His holy lips are sealed, but His out-stretched arms, His wounds, His lovingly-inclined head, speak louder than words: "I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep" (John 10, 11). In union with Mary, with the beloved disciple, and the pious women, let us embrace the foot of the cross, the tree of salvation, and adore the Eternal Son, Who immolated Himself to the

Father for our redemption—the Innocent Lamb Who takes away the sins of the world. Let us beseech our Divine Saviour, bleeding for love of us, for the grace to die for love of Him; to die to our evil habits, to our sensual desires, to pride, to self-will, to levity and dissipation, and to all that opposes His love in our hearts. Let us humbly offer the passion and death of our Lord and God to the heavenly Father through the hands of the Mother of Dolors, for the conversion of sinners and for the salvation of the whole world. By the Precious Blood flowing copiously from the cross, let us beg for a love, strong as death, which recoils from no sacrifice, that thus strengthened we may persevere on the cross of our religious vows until death.

How do I account for my lack of love? Is it not due to my neglect to ponder sufficiently the love of the Crucified? Having considered His painful sufferings, His boundless love, can I ever again refuse my dear Lord a sacrifice?

Second Point

THE OPENING OF THE SAVIOUR'S SACRED SIDE

Not satisfied with having suffered and died, Jesus, in His infinite love, desired to have His Sacred Heart opened, that in life and in death we might conceal ourselves therein as in a secure fortress. The fire of His love should melt our icy hearts. In His Sacred Heart, we should find not only sufficient grace, but an abundance of all the graces which we desire, protection in all temptations, consolation in distress, encouragement and strength in all our sufferings and afflictions. With what confidence should we then approach the throne of grace and heed the sweetly penetrating words of our dear

Saviour: "Come to Me all ye that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you" (Matt. 11, 28). Our heart has need to love and be loved; here we find a Heart that is ever good and true, Whose love is constant, shedding even the last drop of blood to draw our icy hearts close to His loving Heart. On this great day of love let us offer Him our heart in return. Many a time we have given it to Him, but how often have we not reclaimed it wholly or in part, and sullied it by our infidelity! Penetrated with the most profound sentiments of contrition and love, let us, at last, surrender it irrevocably to Him Who will not despise a humble and contrite heart.

By what sacrifice will I prove my gratitude to Jesus for having suffered His sacred side to be opened for me?

Affections: O my Divine Saviour, obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross, Thou hast achieved on the sacrificial altar of Thy love the sacrifice whereby Thou didst merit eternal life for my soul. What couldst Thou have done more for me, to impress me with the terrible malice of sin, but also with the astounding greatness of Thy divine love and mercy? Embracing Thy holy cross, dear Lord, I detest and repent of all my sins. By the merits of Thy saving death, by every drop of Thy Precious Blood, give me the grace to die to myself and all my evil inclinations, and to live in future for Thee alone as a victim of immolation. Wound my heart with the love that opened Thine, O my beloved Saviour, and let the Blood and water from the sacred wound in Thy side flow upon my soul, and be my salvation and my consolation. O sacred Blood, that flowed so copiously on Calvary's height, cleanse all sinners that they may love the great price of their redemption, and in its saving stream find salvation and grace.

Resolution: With tender love and gratitude, I will frequently contemplate my crucified Saviour and renew the sacrifice of the complete abandonment of my entire being.

Spiritual Bouquet: "He was obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross."

Prayer: Soul of Christ.

MEDITATION FOR HOLY SATURDAY

JESUS IS LAID IN THE SEPULCHRE

"And after these things, Joseph of Arimathea besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus. And Pilate gave leave. He came, therefore, and took away the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pounds. They took, therefore, the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths, with the spices, as it is the custom with the Jews to bury. Now there was in the place where He was crucified, a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein no man yet had been laid. There, therefore, because of the parasceve of the Jews, they laid Jesus, because the sepulchre was nigh at hand" (John 19, 38-42).

First Prelude: Behold the Blessed Virgin and the disciples, reverently preparing the Body of Christ for the sepulchre.

Second Prelude: O my beloved Saviour, grant me grace to prepare for Thee an agreeable resting-place in my heart, and to love, esteem and practice the interior, hidden life.

First Point

THE SACRED BODY OF JESUS IS PREPARED FOR THE SEPULCHRE

At the death of Jesus, a great change was wrought. In life, He had not whereon to lay His head; In His passion, He was denied a drop of water to allay His thirst; but hardly had He expired, than He no longer lacked the love and sympathy of His own, neither the faithful service of His disciples, nor the honor of a respectable grave. Joseph and Nicodemus wrapped His sacred Body in costly linens; pious women brought aromatic balsam and precious ointments, and tired not in manifesting their love and veneration for the sacred Body. Well might we envy the holy women their happiness in being permitted to bestow their loving services on our Blessed Lord! But are we not more privileged than were these holy women? Does not the Body of our dear Lord repose in the Tabernacle as in a grave? Yes, here we have His sacred Body and His holy Soul in all the glory of His resurrection. Here, too, loving hearts render Him the tenderest service, frequently visit and console Him in His Eucharistic grave, and offer Him loving sympathy, as did the friends of our Lord of old. Holy Church procures the best, the costliest and most precious that earth can produce, gold and precious gems, for the adornment of His holy sepulchre, and incessantly pays homage to her glorified Saviour in hymns of praise, love, adoration and thanksgiving. Of the Tabernacle, also, the words of the prophet were spoken: "His sepulchre shall be glorious" (Is. 11, 10).

Let us bring the most precious ointments to the tomb of our dear Lord and rejoice in being able to testify our

love by self-immolation and the practice of every virtue. Let us unite our poor prayers and canticles of praise with those of the angels, who form a continuous guard of honor before the holy sepulchre. As Mary, who, though compelled to retire from the grave, remained in spirit, so will we persevere in the company of our dear Lord with all the love of which our hearts are capable, while discharging external duties. Through such interior union with our Divine Saviour, our hearts will become worthy abodes, glorious sepulchres for our Divine Bridegroom, and we will be made worthy to participate in the special graces of His glorious resurrection. Let us beg the Sorrowful Mother to teach us how to show our love, our fidelity, our gratitude to Jesus and to surrender ourselves wholly to Him.

Second Point

OUR LIFE SHOULD BE HIDDEN IN CHRIST

In imitation of our Blessed Mother of God, interior souls desire to follow Jesus on the Way of the Cross, and to die spiritually with Him. They either choose His adorable Heart for their grave, or they pray Jesus to take up His abode in their heart. This was the pious practice of St. Gertrude, whom Jesus assured that He would seal the doors of her senses and put on guard sentiments of a holy fear and love, to defend her against the attacks of all inordinate inclinations. Let us strive more and more to die to the world and to live solely for Jesus. We will endeavor to curb our evil tendencies, to lead a life opposed to nature, and thus tend to intimate union with Christ. What happiness and what peace will be the portion of souls who have conceived the value of such a union! They desire to be seen by God alone, known

by Him alone, guided by Him alone, and rewarded solely by Him. Desirous of concealing their actions from the eyes of men, they communicate with the world only in so far as obedience and the honor of God demand it. Mindful of danger, they place a guard upon their eyes and restrain them even in lawful things. They desire no knowledge but to advance in perfection, and far from all thoughtlessness, are saving of their words. They rejoice when lowly, apparently insignificant tasks are assigned them, which afford them opportunity, by the exercise of humility and self-denial, for closer union with God. Thus, as it were, their heart is a new grave in which no other love reigns than the love of Jesus.

O hidden life, how lavishly do you endow the soul with graces, and how preëminently are you a foretaste of the life of future glory! How powerfully do you put to naught the works of death, and remove our faults and imperfections! Do I tolerate in my heart any other inclination than the love of God? Am I solicitous to conceal my actions from the eyes of the world, that they may be the more pleasing to God?

Affections: O blessed sepulchre, worthy of all veneration and esteem, let me enter thee with pious reverence, devotion, and love. O my beloved Saviour, I pray Thee, transform my heart and make of it an agreeable and holy resting place for Thee. Teach me to die to self that I may rest with Thee in the grave of recollection, silence and seclusion. With all my heart, I will love the silence and repose of the Tabernacle, wherein Thou dwellest, as once in the sepulchre, hidden from the eyes of men. I will deposit at Thy feet every victory achieved over my evil tendencies and corrupt nature, and entreat Thee to renew and confirm more and more, through every Holy

Communion, the new life of grace and love within my heart. My dear Mother of Dolors, let me share thy sorrow and thy love, that like thee, dead to all things, I may live solely in Jesus, with Jesus, and for Jesus.

Resolution: In close union with my holy Mother, I will prepare in silence and holy recollection for the glorious feast of the resurrection of our Blessed Lord.

Spiritual Bouquet: "You are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR EASTER SUNDAY

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

"And behold there was a great earthquake. For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and coming, rolled back the stone and sat upon it. And his countenance was as lightning, and his raiment as snow. And for fear of him, the guards were struck with terror and became as dead men" (Matt. 28, 2-4).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus, rising gloriously from the tomb.

Second Prelude: Adorable Conqueror, I rejoice in Thy glorious resurrection. Replenish my heart with love and exultation and render me worthy to participate in the fruits of Thy glorious triumph.

First Point

THE GLORY OF THE RISEN SAVIOUR

"The Lord is risen! Alleluja!" This is the glad tidings announced by the angels on Easter morn. Jesus,

our beloved Redeemer, Whose bitter passion filled us with grief and sorrow, has returned to life, to die no more. Having conquered death and all His enemies, He now enjoys inexpressible glory in His holy Humanity. A great mystery was enacted on that hallowed Easter morn. In the company of all the holy souls of the Old Testament, who were to witness His resurrection, the glorified soul of Jesus appeared and reunited Itself with His sacred Body, covered with blood and wounds, until then lying in the tomb. What a sudden transformation! With wondrous majesty, arrayed with all the magnificence of heavenly glory, the Lord of life raises Himself from the grave. His sacred wounds, but a moment ago eliciting sympathy and compassion, are now translucent and brilliant! In place of the crown of thorns, a diadem of immortal splendor rests upon His sacred head. How lovely is now the once so shamefully disfigured sacred countenance! His eyes are aglow with heavenly joy, His features radiate a holy peace and inexpressible delight. This transformation was but the work of one moment. Earth trembled as if to celebrate, with awe, the resurrection of her Creator. An angel descended from heaven, his countenance radiant with heavenly lustre, his garments, white as snow. He rolled back the stone from the entrance to the grave and sat thereon. The guards, terrified and blinded by the splendor issuing from the opened cavern, fell senseless to the ground.

Rejoice, O my soul, in the glorious victory of your risen Saviour. If, as a true spouse of the Crucified, you have shared in His sufferings; if the ignominy and the contemptuous treatment accorded Him filled your heart with compassion and sorrow, then, now, participate in the joy of His glorious triumph. Behold, your truest Friend,

your dearest Father, your King, your Lord and God, has risen again. He will live and reign for all eternity!

Is my love the love of exquisite delight, peculiar to the true friends and faithful followers of Christ who rejoice in the marvelous glory of the risen Lord?

Second Point

THE JOY OF HOLY CHURCH ON THIS GLORIOUS FESTIVAL

"This is the day the Lord hath made! Let us rejoice and be glad! Alleluja!" With these words Holy Mother Church exhorts us to rejoice and exult in the resurrection of her Divine Bridegroom. He is risen, she tells us, in the Mass and in the divine office. Yes, He is risen! The Lion of the tribe of Juda has conquered, Alleluja! The heavenly Father has given Him all power in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. Let us rejoice and be glad! May the joy of this great festival expand our heart! Holy Church by her example, invites us to praise and exultation. She has put off her garment of mourning and donned her costliest festal attire,—her lamentations have ceased and ever and anon, she pours forth her joy in the canticle: "Alleluja! Christ is risen from the dead!"

O Mystery of joy and consolation, foundation of our faith and our hope! Thou teachest us that victory and glory will be the end of all sufferings endured for love of Christ. We will, to-day, open our hearts to the great expectations embodied in the resurrection of our Divine Saviour, and seek to become wholly imbued with that true, spiritual joy, which tends to our growth in holiness. Replenished with this holy joy, we shall find all things

easy. Irksome labor and heavy crosses shall then be our delight, while we shall run with alacrity on the way of perfection, forgetting with St. Paul, what we have already achieved and thinking only of that which is yet before us. When oppressed by the hardships of daily life, let us recall the words of St. Paul: "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8, 18). Have I not often experienced that fidelity in little things, perseverance in the combat of my passions and in the exercise of virtue, have elicited new energy and spiritual joy?

Which sacrifice must I make today in order to render my heart receptive for the graces that the Saviour desires to bestow on me so abundantly on this glorious festival?

Affections: O holy, truly blessed day of my beloved Saviour's glorious resurrection! What exquisite joy and delight are mine in Thy glorious triumph! It is my sweetest consolation to know that Thou, dear Lord, hast no more to suffer, and now rejoicest in Thy inexpressible glory and exaltation. O almighty Conqueror of death and hell, complete the work of Thy grace in me, let me participate in the glorious life to which Thou invitest me in the mystery of this day. O Jesus, Who didst clothe in glory and splendor that Body which had been the victim of the cruelty of man, give me grace to die to myself that I may rise again with Thee, and after Thy likeness lead a new, divine, immortal life, worthy of an all-surpassing, everlasting glory! O holy Virgin, by thy glorified Son, obtain for us the grace to rise after our death to the eternal glory of paradise.

Resolution: Animated with holy joy, I will today contemplate the radiant beauty of my risen Saviour, and resolve anew to lead a life of fervor and love.

Spiritual Bouquet: "This is the day the Lord hath made! Let us rejoice and be glad. Alleluja!"

Prayer: O Queen of Heaven, rejoice!

MEDITATION FOR EASTER MONDAY

JESUS APPEARS TO THE TWO DISCIPLES GOING TO EMMAUS

"And behold, two of them went the same day to a town which was sixty furlongs from Jerusalem, named Emmaus. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass that while they talked and reasoned with themselves, Jesus Himself also drawing near, went with them. But their eyes were held, that they should not know Him" (Luke 24, 13-16).

First Prelude: Picture the two disciples, troubled and sad, on their way to Emmaus. Behold, Jesus, the risen Saviour, Who joins them though they do not recognize Him.

Second Prelude: O my beloved Saviour, let me be ever mindful that Thou wilt be my companion on this earthly pilgrimage and that Thy merciful Heart is always open to humble confidence.

First Point

THE TWO DISCIPLES LEAVE JERUSALEM

According to the words of the gospel, the two disciples had been brought to waver in the faith by the terrible incidents of the preceding days. Their souls were flooded with grief. Then, too, they were troubled by doubt in the long desired redemption, because He Who should accomplish it had died the shameful death of the

cross. In their grief, they even discredited the pious women and the Apostles, who testified to the resurrection of the Lord. In their estimation, Jesus was no longer the promised Messiah, but only a prophet. Their confidence, too, was shaken, as we infer from their words: "But we hoped that it was He that should redeem Israel; and now besides all this, today is the third day since these things were done" (Luke 24, 21). Oh, how weak and insufficient to resist temptation is virtue, if not firmly rooted, if not sought for in its proper source!

The disciples had forsaken the company of the Blessed Virgin and the Apostles, to seek comfort in a stroll to Emmaus. It was their fortune that in thought, at least, they were occupied with their Divine Master. In answer to the question: "What are these discourses that you hold one with another?" they could say that they were discoursing on His passion and death. Love, at least, had not wholly died out in their hearts, and could therefore more quickly rekindle in conversation with the Saviour. Are we not often guilty of similar faults? Do not we easily become discouraged and disheartened when God hesitates to grant our petitions, or to realize our hopes and expectations? It seems impossible for us to abide the Lord's own good time. Forgetting that true consolation is to be found in God alone, and not in creatures, we become dismayed and drift away from God, the source of all graces, Who is ever ready to console, to protect, to encourage and strengthen us on our earthly pilgrimage. Let us, therefore, entrust ourselves to the Saviour gloriously risen, Who will replenish our hearts with peace and heavenly bliss.

Second Point

THE LOVE OF JESUS FOR HIS DISCIPLES

How touching is the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus here manifested! While the two disciples, dejected and sad, were discussing intently the recent occurrences, they were suddenly joined by the Saviour, Who addressed them lovingly. He asked them the subject of their conversation, to afford them an opportunity of pouring out their hearts! Oh, that in all our cares and anxieties we would, with child-like simplicity, unburden our heart to our beloved Saviour! What peace should then be ours! Though He knows our wants and needs, and divines our most secret thoughts, Jesus takes pleasure in the humble avowal of our faults and weaknesses, seeing as He does in it a mark of our confidence and trust. Like a good father, who never tires of listening to His dear children, Jesus feels Himself constrained to help, to encourage, and constantly to bestow upon us new proofs of His affection. How loving and affable is not our Blessed Lord in imparting grace to the two disciples and revealing to them the goodness of His Heart! He joins them as a casual traveler, speaks with them as though one of their kind, and unmindful of their being only two, entertains Himself at length with them. Does not such love reveal His concern for the salvation of each individual soul?

Admire the goodness of our Divine Lord in utilizing every opportunity to render souls receptive for His grace. How often, alas, do we misconstrue the designs of Jesus! Wholly unmindful of the nearness of our amiable Consoler, Who withholds His marks of special favor to confirm our faith and our fidelity, we frequently yield to mel-

ancholy and despondency. Oh, let us surrender ourselves unreservedly to our Divine Saviour! Let us consider tribulations as welcome means to come closer to Him! What consolation, encouragement and fortitude should then be our support and stay on the pilgrimage of this mortal life! With what assurance should we then look forward to the reward of eternal glory, which Christ has merited for us by His bitter passion and death!

Affections: O my Saviour, how weak and inconstant is my heart! I am so easily discouraged at sight of difficulties I meet in the discharge of my duties. Is it not due to a lack of faith in Thy divine promises, a lack of confidence in Thy supreme power, Thy unbounded love and mercy? Strengthen me, O Jesus, I pray Thee by Thy glorious resurrection. Let me ever be mindful of Thy holy presence, that I may despise the vain consolation of creatures, and in all reverses have recourse to Thee, my Comforter, my most loving Father. Thus I may become worthy to find in Thee my salvation, my happiness, my peace on this pilgrimage through life, and be vouchsafed the happiness of possessing Thee in never-ending bliss.

Resolution: I will remain in the presence of my risen Saviour by silence and recollection, and in all difficulties have recourse to Him.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Jesus Himself also drawing near, went with them."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR TUESDAY

WONDERFUL QUALITIES OF THE BODY OF THE RISEN SAVIOUR

"Who will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the body of his glory according to the operation whereby also He is able to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. 3, 21).

First Prelude: Behold the risen Saviour, radiant in the splendor of His glory.

Second Prelude: O Jesus, give me grace to realize the wonderful prerogatives of Thy glorified Body, that despising earthly things with my whole heart I may love Thee alone.

First Point

THE BEAUTY OF THE BODY OF THE RISEN SAVIOUR

How glorious must have been the divine splendor of the sacred Body of Our Lord and Saviour! His divine countenance illumined with heavenly glory,—His sacred wounds radiant as so many suns! When St. Teresa had seen only a hand of the King of Glory, she was so enrapt that she was loath to love anything further on this earth. The exquisite beauty of the Body of Jesus will, for all eternity, be the source of the purest heavenly delight and bliss. It is the light that illumines the city of God, which according to St. John "hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon to shine in it" (Apoc. 21, 23).

We will rejoice with our Saviour in His unsurpassed glory, which, though His due from the first moment of His life, He willed to merit by manifold sufferings, and

to impart to us in the measure of our renunciation of sensible gratifications. Would we participate in the glorious fruits of Christ's resurrection, we must lead a new life, by crucifying the old man, subduing the works of the flesh, and dying spiritually. It is our paramount duty ever to vanquish our evil inclinations, especially pride and self-love. Oh, that we would heed the exhortations of our risen Saviour, Who would lead us to glory through mortification and self-denial! That we would strive with all our energy to circumvent the snares of the Evil One, who, by enticing us to sensible gratifications and the false fleeting pleasures, seeks to hinder us from fixing our attention on the things of heaven. My body, too, shall one day shine in the splendor of the transfiguration, if I have fought a good fight. The more I shall have mortified it here, the more brilliant and radiant shall it be. What an incentive to virtue and what an inexhaustible source of consolation!

Second Point

THE IMPASSIBILITY OF THE GLORIFIED BODY OF CHRIST

The entire life of Christ was an uninterrupted chain of sufferings. In infinite love, He subjected His Body to all human miseries,—cold, hunger and fatigue, sufferings, and lastly to a most painful death. Having reunited Itself with the Body after the resurrection, the Soul of Christ imparted to His Body the incapability to suffer, and from that moment the Body, too, enjoyed consummate bliss. Christ had merited this glorious prerogative as Man, by the sufferings which He endured in order to make reparation to the outraged honor of the heavenly Father, and to redeem the world. We, too, must suffer

if we would enjoy a similar glory, such as we read of in the Apocalypse: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away" (Ap. 21, 4).

Let us accept all the reverses of daily life, not with dislike and impatience, but willingly, and sanctify them by patience and perfect resignation to the loving dispensations of Divine Providence, for the more we suffer with Christ here on earth, the more shall we be glorified with Him in heaven. Should it not be our earnest endeavor ever more to inflame our love by accepting cheerfully the daily little trials and sufferings of our vocation? Oh, that our love may approach in intensity, the heroism of the saints, who deemed themselves fortunate to offer their blood, even life itself, for the Saviour. In consequence of their ardent love for the Saviour, they seemed insensible to even the greatest torments. Did not the Apostles glory when they were deemed worthy to suffer contempt for the name of Jesus? We admire such love in the martyrs, who, when stretched on the rack or the red-hot iron, besought their tormentors to inflict upon them still greater pain. They would cheerfully have sacrificed their lives, even a thousand times. What composure and peace would I manifest in sufferings if I loved Jesus more ardently! Do I bear in mind that I must grow strong in suffering the daily little reverses, if I would learn to bear greater trials?

Affections: O my risen Saviour, with holy reverence, and ardent love, I contemplate the marvelous beauty of Thy sacred Body and adore Thee, glorious Conqueror of death, with all the angels who behold Thy inexpressible glory and bliss. How could I ever find anything irksome

or unbearable, after Thou hast shown me, by Thy victorious triumph, that the sufferings of this life are the seed of future glory? Should I not banish from my heart all earthly affections and fix my thoughts and desires on eternal, imperishable things, which alone are worthy of my desires? Do Thou, O glorious Victor, complete in me the work of Thy mercy and draw my heart and mind to Thee, that I may live in Thee, labor with Thee, and one day be glorified with Thee in heavenly bliss.

Resolution: If little sufferings weigh me down, I will, in all humility, confess that my love of the Saviour is still very slight and rouse myself to new fervor.

Spiritual Bouquet: "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR WEDNESDAY

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD, THE TYPE OF OUR SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION

"For we are buried together with Him by baptism into death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life" (Romans 6, 4).

First Prelude: Behold our Divine Lord issuing triumphantly from the sealed tomb.

Second Prelude: O mighty Conqueror of death and hell, give me courage and strength to overcome the obstacles to my spiritual resurrection.

First Point

OUR SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION

Our Divine Saviour rose from the tomb to a new and perfect life to teach us that we must rise from the grave of sin and tepidity, to a new and zealous life. The Apostle exhorts us thereto, with the words: "As Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so may we also walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6, 4). When Jesus rose from the dead, He loosened the linens that bound Him; we, too, must tear asunder the fetters that bind us to creatures, to the goods, honors, and pleasures of this world if we would lead a new life. It is true, we have chosen the solitude of the cloister and exteriorly renounced all things, but there remains still much to be done, before we shall have completely disengaged our heart from all earthly affections.

Our own corrupt nature, more than the world, is opposed to our spiritual resurrection; it is, in truth, a heavy stone, the crushing weight of which often bears us down. Daily, yes hourly, we feel this two-fold law within us, of which the Apostle says: "For I know there dwelleth not in me; that is to say, in my flesh, that which is good. For to will, is present with me; but to accomplish that which is good, I find not" (Rom. 7, 18). If we desire to pray, lift up our hearts to God, nature drags us down to earth. We should like to hold our tongue, but nature entices us to speak idle words; we are inclined humbly to submit, to obey, to be meek, amiable, patient, forbearing, but nature rebels. How often have we grown disheartened and discouraged at this ever-recurring task, forgetting that if there were no difficulty in the spiritual life, there should, likewise, be no real virtue. The Evil One, in

league with perverse nature, seeks ever to hinder our spiritual resurrection. He guards the entrance to our heart to suppress our every virtuous effort in its incipiency. But let us not be disheartened,—Jesus, Who in His glorious resurrection vanquished death and hell, is with us, and "we can do all things, in Him Who strengtheneth us." Do I recognize the chief obstacle to my spiritual resurrection? What stone weighs down my heart and bars the way to my progress in virtue?

Second Point

OUR SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION MUST BE GENEROUS AND PERMANENT

During the forty days of Our Lord's sojourn on earth after His resurrection, He repeatedly appeared to His Apostles and disciples, to convince them that He was truly risen, by allowing them to touch Him, and by eating with them. Our spiritual resurrection must, likewise, be real; we must in reality rise from an imperfect life to a life of fervor. But how can this be done? By exercising ourselves in all sincerity in the virtues opposed to our predominant fault,—by humbling ourselves on occasions that formerly indulged our pride, by punctuality in the daily regulation. Doing this, we will co-operate with the abundant graces Jesus imparts to us in this stupendous mystery. Oh! that we may not relapse into our former faults and sins and thus run the risk of missing the lofty aim, the object of our desires in religion. Let us beseech our Blessed Lord to imbue us with generosity and with fervor that will not relax but, rather, become intensified under trials and hardships. Prayer will secure for us His Divine assistance, which is indispensable for the accomplishment of the least good. He will not only send us

an angel, but Himself, the gloriously risen Saviour, will aid us with His omnipotent hand, provided we are of good will.

Which are the marks of my spiritual resurrection from the grave of sin, negligence, and tepidity?

Affections: O my Jesus, Thou hast vanquished my enemies, conquer every obstacle that my perverted heart presents to the merciful operations of Thy grace, that I may rise with Thee to a new spiritual life, and henceforth walk in the path of holiness. Thou, my Divine Redeemer, knowest best what huge boulders bar the way to the complete, happy transformation of my heart. Thou knowest what imperfections hold my corrupt nature captive. Thy grace has frequently impelled me to amend my life, but owing to the weakness of my will, I have succumbed to the assaults of my enemies, and relapsed into the grave of tepidity and imperfections. O my Saviour, of myself I can do nothing, but do Thou confirm in me unbounded trust in Thy almighty grace, for with it I can do all things.

Resolution: I will combat that fault particularly which is most opposed to my spiritual resurrection.

Spiritual Bouquet: "For if you are risen with Christ, seek the things that are in heaven and not those of earth."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR THURSDAY

OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION, AN INCENTIVE TO PERSEVERANCE IN THE SERVICE OF GOD

"Jesus said to her: 'I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live' " (John 11, 25).

First Prelude: Behold our risen Saviour, resplendent in heavenly glory.

Second Prelude: I pray Thee, O my Jesus, through the power of Thy glorious resurrection strengthen my faith, reanimate my hope and enkindle my heart with grateful affection.

First Point

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, A PLEDGE OF OUR FUTURE RESURRECTION

Our Lord's wonderful victory over death in His resurrection is a sure pledge of our future resurrection, as the Apostle testifies with the words: "And if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you; He that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, shall quicken also your mortal bodies, because of His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8, 11). Knowing from so reliable a source that after the short rest in the grave,—short in view of eternity,—we shall rise again to receive heavenly joys as recompense for a holy life, must we not feel impelled to sacrifice everything to attain such exquisite happiness? Will not this truth be for us a sure guide to heaven? If the short, delusive pleasures of earth suffice to stimulate to the most heroic deeds, should we not exert every fibre of our heart to merit the pure, sublime and imperishable joys awaiting us in a happy resurrection? "The hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God" (John 5, 28). "And the sea shall give up the dead that were in it and death and hell shall give up their dead" (Rev. 20, 13). Oh, truly blessed Easter! With what rapturous delight shall the just re-inhabit their body from which they have so long been separated! Here below it

was the companion of their banishment, the frail dwelling place of their soul, the means to glorify God by mortification and suffering. How radiant are those members that have labored untiringly in the service of the Lord! What joy to have despised the world, trodden vain glory under foot, and sought the honor of God in all things, and now to receive from the Supreme Judge of life and death, the imperishable crown of everlasting glory! "They have sown amidst tears, but shall reap everlasting, all-surpassing joy and bliss."

In the Apostles' Creed, we daily say: "I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting." What an incentive to patience in sufferings and reverses! Are my feeble efforts to acquire virtue supported by this great hope!

Second Point

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD, AN EXHORTATION TO LOVE AND GRATITUDE

Hope in the future resurrection must expand our hearts and incite us to offer them anew to our loving Saviour as a weak tribute of thanksgiving and love. For love of us, He assumed the weakness of human kind, abased Himself by submitting to the shameful crucifixion; for love of us, He triumphed over death to restore to us our forfeited claim to immortality and, as St. Paul puts it, to make the body of our lowliness like to the body of His glory.

Must not the thought of Christ's boundless love imbue us with the desire to coöperate faithfully with the graces which unite us most intimately with Him here on earth, and secure for us a place in His Divine Heart in the life to come! How could we be so ungrateful as to

place obstacles to such love? Should we not, as religious, employ every opportunity to give joy to the Heart of Jesus and to make our future resurrection a glorious one? It was with these sentiments that the martyrs went exultingly to the most painful death, longing for the moment when they should have the happiness to be with Jesus. The thought of their future glory buoyed them up with invincible bravery, and supported them in the bitter pangs of martyrdom. Let us, then, courageously cope with the lighter temptations wherewith God wills to test our fidelity! Let us persevere in patience, and accept the slight crosses that we meet, with cheerful resignation to the holy Will of God. We will say with St. Paul: "Neither death, nor life, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ, Jesus, our Lord!" (Rom. 8, 38-39). Have I not reasons for special gratitude towards my Saviour for giving me, in my holy vocation, such a particular claim to a future glorious resurrection? Which sacrifice of love and gratitude has He a right to expect of me today?

Affections: Honor and love to Thee, O Eternal Son of God, who didst deign not only to die for us, but also to rise gloriously from the tomb. Thy glorious resurrection is the pledge of ours. Thou wilt have us live with Thee for all eternity, that Thy victory may be ours. Give us grace so to live that our body, too, may rise resplendent from the grave to share Thy glory for all eternity.

Resolution: In grateful love, I will make every sacrifice that Jesus demands of me today.

Spiritual Bouquet: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that I shall see Him."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR FRIDAY

THE SACRED WOUNDS OF THE GLORIFIED BODY OF JESUS

"See My hands and feet, that it is I Myself" (Luke 24, 39).

First Prelude: Behold the glorified Saviour, His sacred wounds radiating on all sides dazzling beams of light.

Second Prelude: O my Jesus, Who willest to preserve Thy glorified wounds as everlasting trophies, let me find therein a secure refuge in all sufferings and hardships.

First Point

THE WOUNDS OF JESUS, A PERPETUAL MEMORIAL OF HIS LOVE

Having lovingly compassionated the bleeding wounds of our dear Saviour, during Holy Week, we now, in the midst of our Easter joy, behold these marks of infinite love in His transfigured Body. He reveals to us His sacred wounds to enlist our love and sympathy. He wills to retain them as a perpetual memorial of His love for us, testifying to the infinite goodness of His divinely loving Heart; He further bears them as glorious trophies of His victory over sin, death and hell! What a powerful incentive to rejoice in the midst of sufferings and tribulations! With what generosity and heroism has not the contemplation of the wounds of Jesus animated the saints! Despising sceptre and crown and all that the world so much admires, they strove solely with the Apostle for the honor to bear the marks of the wounds of Christ in their bodies, that is, to share labors, sufferings and contempt with Him. They desired naught but

to resemble Jesus in all things, and to be distinguished in the service of their King by patience in suffering. What glory shall one day encompass the wounds they sustained in the struggle against the enemies of God and their soul! How will they rejoice for all eternity to have suffered contempt for their Saviour! Let us beg our Blessed Saviour, Who has distinguished His dearest friends on earth by these sacred marks as a constant memorial of His love, to help us be ever mindful of it and to strive incessantly to return love for love! What comfort shall then be ours in the hour of death! With what confidence shall we then press our dying lips on the crucifix, on the blessed wounds of our dear Saviour! Do I glory in sufferings and tribulations? Does the sight of the sacred wounds of my Saviour awaken in me the desire to suffer something for Him?

Second Point

THE WOUNDS OF JESUS, OUR REFUGE IN NEED

To all who seek protection, comfort and refreshment in the hardships of this life, Jesus offers His sacred wounds as secure refuge. "Fear not, behold My hands and My feet," He said to His Apostles, when, terrified they imagined to see a ghost. Our infinitely loving Saviour quiets their fears and confirms their faith and their confidence. Oh, the immense goodness of Jesus, Who wills these sources and fountain-heads of salvation to be always open to us! Come and see and taste how delightful and secure it is to dwell therein! Thus the saints, who have experienced the lovableness of these blessed sites of peace and comfort, cry to us. If you grow faint in the combat against the enemies of salvation; if you begin to waver

and to doubt, oh, then fly for safety to these clefts in the rock. St. Augustine confesses that in all his sufferings he found no more effectual remedy than the wounds of the Saviour.

Let us, too, in all perplexities and trials, have recourse to these sacred wounds. If depressing thoughts assail us, if the burden of our sins weighs us down, we shall find in these glorious wounds the consoling assurance that our beloved Saviour has rendered to the heavenly Father infinite satisfaction for our sins and those of the whole world. In the face of all that our Lord and Saviour has suffered for us, dare we complain in hours of trial? Let us draw the living waters of grace from the Saviour's fountains. With St. Francis Xavier let us seek therein new strength and energy for a life of labor and sacrifice. Let it be our favorite devotion to salute these saving wounds lovingly as marks of the infinite love of our Blessed Saviour. What more could He have done to satisfy His burning thirst for our salvation?

Affections: O adorable wounds, so dear to our Blessed Saviour, with tender devotion, gratitude, and love, I salute and venerate you! In union with all the angels and saints I praise and extol the merciful Lord, for you proclaim anew His great love for men! O holy wounds, you are my refuge and my repose. You are my light; in your school I will seek counsel. You are my strength; from you I will draw comfort in tribulations. You are furnaces of love; with humble confidence I will draw near that my heart may be inflamed. I will draw the waters of grace from the Saviour's fountains with exceeding joy that I may one day behold these sacred wounds glorified and transfigured, and find therein a never-ending source of love and bliss.

Resolution: I will lovingly salute the sacred wounds of Jesus, and have recourse to them in all trials and temptations.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Holy Mother, pierce me through; in my heart each wound renew, of my Saviour Crucified."

Prayer: Soul of Christ.

MEDITATION FOR SATURDAY

JESUS APPEARS TO HIS BLESSED MOTHER

"According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart thy comforts have given joy to my soul" (Ps. 93, 19).

First Prelude: Imagine the Blessed Virgin in ecstasies of bliss, beholding her Divine Son in His glory.

Second Prelude: O holy Mother, let me share the joy of thy maternal heart on beholding thy beloved Son, and teach me to draw profit for my salvation from the consolations as well as from the trials which the Lord in His goodness permits me to suffer.

First Point

THE JOY OF OUR BLESSED MOTHER ON BEHOLDING HER BELOVED SON

Though Scripture makes no mention of our Lord's apparition to His Blessed Mother, we are convinced that she was the first permitted to share the boundless joy of her glorified Son. He, the mighty God, the Conqueror of death and hell, the Son of the heavenly Father, is and will always be the beloved Son of the Blessed Virgin. He knew how great were the pain and sorrow of the most affectionate of all mothers. She had attended Him

throughout His death agony; had stood by Him to the last, the oblation of her maternal heart coalescing with the oblation of her Son on the cross. Therefore, she, before all others, and to a greater extent, was vouchsafed the privilege of tasting the joys of His resurrection. After the laying of the Body of her beloved Son in the tomb, Mary spent her time in affections of the most ardent longing to see Him again, for her faith in His resurrection was immovable.

If the Lord is nigh to the sorrowful, must He not have been constrained with a holy vehemence to terminate speedily the painful longing of His tenderest and deeply afflicted Mother? What tongue can attempt to depict the effusions of the love of Son and Mother in the moment of reunion? What must Mary have felt, when she beheld her tenderly loved Son in radiant glory, heard His voice, not as on the cross, when the sword of sorrow pierced her heart, but exultant and consoling; when she beheld that sacred Body, which but three days ago she held in her embrace, bleeding and lacerated, now radiant in the splendor of the Divinity? With what reverence and devotion did she adore Him! What joy swayed her heart, when she contemplated the work of the redemption! How wrapt must she have been at His glory and beauty, how vehement was her love! how profoundly must she have humbled herself before the majesty of her God, Who had condescended to become her Son! O my heavenly Mother, I rejoice in thy happiness! As thy child, and the spouse of thy dear Son, I unite with thee, to adore, love and praise our risen Saviour.

Second Point

WE MUST SEEK JOY BY THE PATH OF SUFFERING

By the excess of her sufferings, Mary merited a superabundance of joy. The Saviour wills to reward us in the measure of our love, and every one can say, with David: "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts have given joy to my soul" (Ps. 93, 19).

Would we know the extent of our love, let us sound the depths of our spirit of mortification and our love of suffering. Who recoils from the cross, who yields to despondency and impatience in tribulations, is little fit to receive divine consolations. Let us cultivate love for mortification and be convinced that our frequent lack of consolation and spiritual joy is due to our neglect in utilizing the opportunities of self-denial, of mortifying vanity and self-love! Though the servants of God continually alternated between joy and sorrow, consolation and desolation, because the Lord would try them in order to ground them in humility, they feared, nevertheless, that those trials were born of their imperfections. With eager longing they sought for opportunities to prove their love for God, and to draw him again toward themselves by profound humility and ardent affections. With the Psalmist, they exclaimed: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God" (Ps. 42, 2). Oh, that we would profit by the interior trials, permitted by God to come over us, to give us knowledge of our weaknesses and defects! Let us repent of our past infidelities, by which we have augmented our weakness, and bear it with all humility in the spirit of penance. Doing this we shall never go astray, and our

sorrow will be dispelled by a period of interior calm and peace.

Affections: O holy and glorious Virgin, my beloved Mother Mary, with heartfelt joy I join in the jubilee of the angelic hosts and in the canticle of Holy Church. "O Queen of Heaven, rejoice! Alleluja! He Whom thou wast made worthy to bear, Alleluja! Hath risen again as He said! Alleluja!" I offer thee my felicitations to the honor and glory which the resurrection of Thy Son has brought upon thee, His Blessed Mother. Forget us not, thy poor children, O powerful and benign Virgin! Disengage our hearts from all earthly affections that the grace of our Blessed Saviour may find no obstacle, and the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit constantly dwell in us.

Resolution: I will rejoice in the happiness of my dear Mother, and pray her to let me share in the sentiments of her loving heart.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, Alleluja! For the Lord hath truly risen, Alleluja!"

Prayer: O Queen of Heaven rejoice . . .

MEDITATION FOR LOW SUNDAY

JESUS APPEARS TO THE ASSEMBLED DISCIPLES ON EASTER SUNDAY

"Now when it was late that same day, the first of the week, and the doors were shut, where the apostles were gathered together for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them: 'Peace be to you' " (John 20, 19).

First Prelude: In spirit enter the Cenacle and behold the risen Saviour in the midst of the frightened disciples.

Second Prelude: Let me understand, O Jesus, that Thou art ever ready to impart Thy grace to me, provided I have rendered my heart receptive for it.

First Point

JESUS APPEARS TO THE ASSEMBLED DISCIPLES

The gospel mentions expressly that Jesus appeared to His disciples in the evening. He delayed His advent that He might announce His resurrection repeatedly, because the disciples were still wholly distracted over His death, and not yet disposed to believe the stupendous mystery. Such is the usual course of Divine Providence, that by the hesitancy of grace we may the better prepare ourselves for it. We frequently complain that God delays to grant us a favor, and like the disciples, yield to discouragement, instead of clearing the way of all hindrances, utilizing our time, and thus rendering ourselves less unworthy to receive the fulness of divine grace. If at such times we exercise ourselves in humility, in faith, and persevere in the spirit of prayer, the Saviour will approach us with the kiss of peace. On appearing quite unexpectedly in their midst, He addresses sweet words of consolation to His disciples, "Peace be to you." "It is I, fear not!" He willed to remind them of the indulgence and forbearance that He had always manifested toward them, and assures them that His sentiments are still unaltered. And the more to banish from their hearts all fear and terror, he shows them the sacred wounds in His hands and feet.

Let us picture our Blessed Saviour in the midst of

His Apostles, adore His Divine Majesty, and contemplate devoutly the wounds that He willed to receive for our redemption. He still bears them in His sacred Body, to keep ever open for us a place of refuge. We will reverently kiss these sacred wounds with confiding trust that the wounds of our soul may be healed. What an excellent means to calm the disturbed heart, to liberate the spirit from the bonds of timidity and depression, and to experience the efficacy of the divine kiss of peace.

Second Point

JESUS REBUKES HIS DISCIPLES FOR THEIR INCREDULITY

Having given His Apostles, who had so cowardly forsaken Him during His passion, many new proofs of His goodness, Jesus reprimands them for their incredulity. Let us note how lovingly the Divine Master proceeds with His guilty disciples. He reproaches them only after He had reassured them that it was He, and convinced them of His love, but oh, the goodness of His Heart! His reproaches did not touch upon their desertion during the time of His sufferings nor upon their weak faith in His promises. This wrong was a personal offense and their merciful Master made no mention of it. He reproved them only for their lack of faith in the testimony of those who had seen Him after His resurrection. Oh, the loving mildness of our Divine Saviour! Jesus was just as mild and meek after His resurrection as He was wont to be during His public life, and is so now for us all, as long as we live in this mortal body.

Let us, therefore, employ well the time of grace that is yet given us, in which to merit forgiveness of sin. By

charitable intercourse with our neighbor we can render ourselves worthy of the remission of our faults. In humility and meekness we will forget all injuries, and never reproach our neighbor with those faults of which he sincerely repents. O my loving Jesus, may I ever better understand the infinite goodness of Thy Sacred Heart, and have recourse to Thee with boundless love and confidence.

Affections: O most amiable Redeemer, on the day of Thy glorious triumph, Thy loving Heart is mindful of the fearful disciples, who forsook Thee during Thy passion but in whose hearts Thou didst discern the most bitter sorrow for their infidelity. How divinely mild and loving that kiss of peace wherewith Thou didst console them, how bountiful Thy mercy and compassion wherewith Thou didst aid their weakness. O benign Lord, thus Thou dost act even today, toward souls who return to Thee, contrite and humble. Thou wilt then reveal Thyself to me, if filled with mistrust in self, I have recourse to Thee, the almighty, benign and merciful Saviour, with all the ailments of my soul. Strengthen my heart, as Thou didst strengthen the hearts of Thy disciples through the grace of the Holy Ghost. Teach me to be mild and indulgent toward others, in imitation of the example which Thou didst set me in this mystery.

Resolution: To render myself worthy of the goodness of my Lord and Saviour, I will practice mildness and forbearance toward my fellow-religious and those in my charge.

Spiritual Bouquet: "It is I, fear not."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR MONDAY

THE HOLY WOMEN GO TO THE SEPULCHRE

"And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought sweet spices, that coming, they might anoint Jesus. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they come to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen. And they said to one another: 'Who shall roll the stone back from the door of the sepulchre?' " (Mark 16, 1-3).

First Prelude: Picture the holy women, early in the morning on their way to the sepulchre to anoint the Body of their Lord with precious ointments.

Second Prelude: Inflame me, O Lord, with Thy holy love, that I may be generous and fervent in the discharge of my duties.

First Point

THE ZEAL OF THE HOLY WOMEN

Before daybreak after the Sabbath, the holy women started out for the sepulchre, to anoint the Body of the Lord. How ardently they loved Jesus! They knew well that Joseph and Nicodemus had already anointed the sacred Body, but on account of the Sabbath it had to be done hurriedly. What satisfied the demands of strict necessity did not satisfy their love. They felt an eager longing to lavish on the sacred Body of their beloved Master the last honors with all care and solicitude. How are we forced to admire their zeal and fearlessness! Alone, and before break of day they leave the city, ascend Calvary, and go straightway to the sepulchre. Such is

the work of charity that knows no bounds, fears no obstacles, and recoils from no difficulty or danger.

How much could we do for the honor of God and the salvation of souls if we were inflamed with similar love! With what fervor should we then perform our spiritual exercises, comply with the obligations of our holy state and advance in perfection! What progress would we make in perfection! Love, which never thinks it has done enough, would sweeten all our difficulties.

Ought not our zeal surpass that of the holy women? They honored the Body of the Saviour after His death, but we may hasten to His Tabernacle in which He reposes under the form of bread,—may receive His glorified Body in Holy Communion. We have the happiness of serving members of our Lord's mystical body in the poor, the sick, and the children entrusted to our care. Oh, how great is our happiness, how sublime are the obligations of our holy vocation! Alas, why are we not animated by a more lively faith, a more ardent love, a more intense desire?

Second Point

THE WORDS OF THE HOLY WOMEN

"Who shall roll back the stone?" asked the holy women, when they were well under way. Now they recalled the insurmountable obstacle that barred the way to the achievement of their undertaking. Though they realized that their strength was insufficient to overcome it, they did not turn back, but rather continued their way, intent upon rendering the last services to their beloved Master. Let us admire their great steadfastness and implicit trust, grounded in the love of Jesus. How often do we lack courage and confidence, when God demands a work of piety of us! We forget that at the same time He

imparts the means to overcome all obstacles. In imitation of the example of the holy women we will proceed courageously, blindly trusting in the Lord. If, like the holy women, we do our share, God will do His, and we can do all things in Him, Who strengtheneth us.

How great was the amazement of the holy women, when, on reaching the grave, they saw the stone rolled back. God had anticipated their confidence, had sent an angel to aid them, and in a single moment, removed the insurmountable barrier. How often have we experienced the powerful and benign assistance of almighty God! How often has Divine Providence lovingly aided our constancy, our trust, and to our great astonishment disposed all things in a manner surpassing our expectations!

Affections: O my God, inflame in my cold heart the fire of the strong, self-sacrificing love I admire in these holy women. How often does not their example put me to shame! How weak and inconstant am I in the face of difficulties, in the discharge of my duties! May I never forget that I, too, serve a Lord Who has power to remove every hindrance, Whose goodness sustains me with His grace, Who sends His angel to protect me. Quicken my confidence, O Lord, let my courage wax strong in the struggle with my passions, that I may say with the Apostle: "For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Rom. 8, 38-39).

Resolution: I will perform all my actions with renewed zeal and love.

Spiritual Bouquet: "I can do all things in Him, Who strengtheneth me."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR TUESDAY

THE ANGELS INSTRUCT THE HOLY WOMEN CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

"And the angel answering said to the women: 'Fear not you; for I know that you seek Jesus Who was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen as He said. Come, and see the place where the Lord was laid' " (Matt. 28, 5-6).

First Prelude: Picture the angel in shining apparel speaking to the holy women at the sepulchre.

Second Prelude: Grant me grace, O Jesus, ever to seek Thee, the Crucified, that I may render myself worthy of Thy pleasure and Thy grace.

First Point

THE HOLY WOMEN COME TO THE SEPULCHRE

With fear and trembling they beheld the angel, who had rolled back the stone and had seated himself on it. But the heavenly messenger, whose apparition had hurled the guards to the ground and put them to flight, soon ended their consternation, when he said: "Fear not, for I know that you seek Jesus of Nazareth!" All who seek Jesus crucified have nothing to fear; neither in this world nor in the next; neither from the good angels who protect, comfort, and encourage, nor from the evil spirits who are powerless in their regard. Such is the compensation with which God rewards all that seek Him with perseverance, zeal, and love. Peace, calmness and true joy of spirit shall be their portion, while those who seek themselves or anything outside of God, shall find naught but

unrest, fear, and trouble. Let us, therefore, diligently seek Jesus, by not fleeing the cares and hardships of our vocation. Animated by a fervent desire, let us cheerfully accept, and patiently bear, whatever is repugnant. May I always be able to say in truth: I seek Jesus, the Crucified; for love of Him I will bear the cross, will persevere with Him, die with Him on the cross.

Why else have I chosen the religious state, whose aim it is to crucify the old man constantly? Why have I joined the ranks of apostolic souls, if not that besides carrying my own cross I may help others carry theirs?

Second Point

THE ANGELS ANNOUNCE THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

The angel having dispelled their fear, the holy women entered the sepulchre, but found not the Body of the Lord. Two other angels appeared to them, who said: "Why seek you the living with the dead? He is not here, but is risen. Remember how He spoke unto you, when He was yet in Galilee, saying: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and the third day rise again' " (Luke 24, 5-8). How great must have been the joy of these holy women, to know that their Master lives and that they failed to see His Body because He was risen from the dead. Happy women, who were the first to hear of the resurrection from angels' lips! They had merited such happiness by following the Saviour, not only when He revealed His power by astounding miracles, but also when, laden with the cross, He walked the painful road to Calvary, and again now, when they were about to bestow marks of faithful love on Christ in the sepulchre. The words

of the angel, however, savored also of a slight reproach; how often had Jesus told His own, that He would rise again on the third day, and still they forgot such a glorious, consoling promise. The enemies of Jesus, the pharisees, thought of it, nevertheless, and sought for means to hinder the accomplishment of His prophecy; the friends of Jesus, on the contrary, must be reminded of it, even on finding the sepulchre open and empty on the third day.

Just so superficially do we consider incidents in the light of faith, in the time of tribulation. While we forget what there is to hope for with reference to our future resurrection, to fear, or to lose, the children of the world endeavor studiously to ward off a temporal disaster or to secure an earthly advantage. Let us frequently call to mind the great promises given us by our Lord. Let us heed the admonitions of the holy angels. How much more easily shall we then shoulder the burdens of life and how much more merit shall we acquire?

Affections: The holy women seek Thee, O Jesus; as the Crucified I, too, can find Thee only on the way of constant crucifixion of perverted nature, dying to self, to rise with Thee to a glorious life like Thine,—a new, divine life, by noble and pure sentiments,—an immortal life, by perseverance in good. Do Thou effect such a happy transformation in me, O my God! Grant that I may never cease to seek Thee, how hidden soever Thou mayest be. Grant that I may always find Thee, through the cross, O my beloved Bridegroom, that thereby I may render myself more and more worthy of Thy grace and Thy glorious promises.

Resolution: I will perseveringly seek my Saviour by leading a mortified, humble, and hidden life.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Fear not, for I know you seek Jesus, Who was crucified."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR WEDNESDAY

JESUS APPEARS TO MARY MAGDALEN

"But Mary stood at the sepulchre without, weeping. Now as she was weeping, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre. And she saw two angels in white, sitting, one at the head and one at the feet where the Body of Jesus had been laid. They say to her: 'Woman, why weepest thou?' She saith to them: 'Because they have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him.' When she had thus said, she turned herself back and saw Jesus standing; and she knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith to her: 'Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?' She, thinking that it was the gardener saith to Him: 'Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away' " (John 20, 11-15).

First Prelude: Picture Mary Magdalen at the entrance to the grave, weeping, and seeking the Body of her Divine Master.

Second Prelude: Grant me the grace, O my God, to seek Thee with an ardent desire, with humility and perseverance, and to renounce everything that might separate me from Thee.

First Point

MAGDALEN AT THE SEPULCHRE

Mary Magdalen came to the grave very early with the other women. Seeing the stone rolled back, she

hastened to announce to Peter and John that the Body of the Lord had been stolen. Love urged her to return speedily to the tomb of the Master. The thought of the missing sacred Body, Which may have become the object of the scorn of His enemies, tortured her distracted soul. Disconsolate and weeping, she gave vent to her sorrow. After a short time, full of ardent longing and fondly hoping to find Him Whom her soul loved, she stooped to look deeper into the cave. The women had again left the tomb, and the Apostles, too, had returned, but Magdalen could not tear herself away from the place that had enclosed her Master. How many tears may she have shed; how often, repeated His adorable name! How was her soul occupied with the object of her love! Truly, of her may be said: "She hath loved much." Let us test our love for Jesus. Do we, like Magdalen at the sepulchre, persevere in our resolution? How great is our desire to find Jesus in fervent prayer, in mortification and in retirement? Oh, that we would at least realize our great loss should we have forfeited the consolations of Jesus through tepidity! That like Magdalen we would persevere in seeking Him!

Let us note the utter indifference of Magdalen toward all that is not Jesus. On looking into the grave once more, she saw two angels, who said: "Woman, why weepest thou?" She answered: "Because they have taken away my Lord and I know not whither they have laid Him." Nothing impressed her, not even the apparition of the angels,—their appearance did not seem to terrify, nor their splendor, dazzle her. She saw and heard them; spoke to them only to gain information as to the whereabouts of her Master. When they told her nothing of the object of her love, she turned away from

these heavenly messengers and directed her attention to the gardener, that he might tell her something of her beloved Master. Oh, that Jesus were so indelibly inscribed on our hearts that we would have no interest in anything that bears no relation to Him! Must we not be ashamed to feel a corporal privation very keenly while we remain indifferent to the lessening or the total loss of grace?

Second Point

THE ADMIRABLE COURAGE OF MAGDALEN

While Magdalen was seeking Jesus, He was near her and observed, with complacency, her tender affection. He is never remote from those who seek Him with all their hearts. He always takes our desire as the measure of His benefits, and if He sometimes tarries before answering our prayers, He does it with the intention of inspiring us with greater desire and esteem for His graces, that He may be able to impart them more generously. Oh, that we understood rightly how to secure Jesus to our souls, by recollection and love, how soon should we be perfect! Magdalen knew not that it was the Master, but believed Him to be the gardener, Whom, when He asked the cause of her sorrow, she answered immediately: "Sir, if Thou hast taken Him, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." What ample material for contemplation in this touching answer! She does not even name her Lord, but at once presses her request, as though every one knew of whom she spoke. She volunteers to get Him, weak woman that she is, never considering that the task is beyond her strength. Thus completely forgetting her weakness, she is ready to stake everything for her Master. Ah, when will Jesus find such generous dis-

positions in us! Alas, even among religious there are such as exert themselves beyond their strength in order to please men, or to satisfy self-love, but who, when there is question of denying themselves, or serving God, of advancing in perfection, only take counsel with their weakness, and consider everything impossible.

Oh, that we would once begin not only to declare our love for Jesus in words, but to glorify Him by magnanimity in His service!

Affections: O illustrious servant of God, St. Mary Magdalen, glorious model for souls that love God! May we seek Him Who is the Bridegroom of our souls, the sole love of our hearts, with the fervor and zeal you manifested at the sepulchre. Assist us with thy intercession. O my beloved Saviour, replenish my heart with ardent longing to possess Thee, to be wholly Thine, and to love Thee with a love like that of Magdalen. Grant that I may find it impossible to live without Thee, that I may seek Thee everywhere, and find rest nowhere save where Thou art, the life of my soul, my Lord and my God!

Resolution: Often during the day I will recall the presence of God and make an oblation of myself to His love.

Spiritual Bouquet: "I will arise and seek Him Whom my soul loveth."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR THURSDAY

JESUS REVEALS HIMSELF TO MARY MAGDALEN

"Jesus saith to her: 'Mary!' She turning, saith to Him: 'Rabboni!' which is to say 'Master.' Jesus saith

to her: 'Do not touch me, for I am not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brethren and say to them: I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God' " (John 20, 16-17).

First Prelude: Picture Magdalen recognizing her Divine Master and kneeling at His feet.

Second Prelude: I pray Thee, O my Jesus, to cleanse my love of all selfishness, that in prayer and at work I may seek only Thy greater honor and pleasure.

First Point

JESUS REWARDS THE LOVE OF MARY MAGDALEN

Magdalen is in the presence of her Divine Master; still, she does not recognize Him. Love glows in her heart, but her faith is yet imperfect. The Lord, moved by the tender devotion of this loving soul, speaks the word "Mary." At once there arise in the heart of the happy penitent all the remembrances of the divine intimacy, and in an exuberance of bliss, she can say only the word, "Rabboni!" Oh, the infinite love of the Sacred Heart for Magdalen, who, though more guilty than the rest, knew, according to the words of our Lord, how to love more! This was the reward of her fidelity in following Jesus to Calvary to the foot of the cross; for her great concern about Him even beyond the grave, permitting herself no rest till she had again found the sole object of her love.

Do we, like Magdalen, seek Jesus, our heavenly Bridegroom, with all the ardor of our desire? Do we not grow despondent and discouraged, if, be it on account of our unfaithfulness, or to test our love, Jesus deprives us of all interior consolations? What joy must it cause

our Blessed Saviour to find souls, constant and persevering in giving Him marks of a true, self-sacrificing love! In due time He will refresh them with His sweetest consolations, verifying the words of the prophet: "The Lord is good to them that hope in Him, to the soul that seeketh Him" (Jer. 3, 25).

Second Point

JESUS COMMISSIONS MAGDALEN TO TELL THE DISCIPLES OF HIS RESURRECTION

As soon as Magdalen had recognized her Divine Master, she was eager to embrace His sacred feet. How great her desire to pour out her heart to Him, and to taste, to the fullest extent, of His divine presence! Jesus, however, does not permit her to do so, to teach her that the time of consummate bliss had not yet arrived. "Touch Me not for I am not yet ascended to my Father." There we, too, shall find unspeakable happiness for our sufferings and hardships and the labors of our holy vocation. "Go, tell my brethren and say to them: 'I ascend to My Father and to your Father: to My God and to your God.'" Thus the Saviour speaks to this valiant and self-sacrificing soul. He knows that the disciples are sad and dejected and He wills to console them. Mary Magdalen should bring them the glad tidings of His resurrection and prepare them for His speedy apparition.

Let us learn from this, how pleasing it is to God to interrupt exercises of piety in holy obedience to devote ourselves to our duties, to comfort the sorrowful and to assist the needy; in general, to practice the works of charity. Let us, therefore, not be dejected when we are compelled to leave Jesus, as it were, in order to discharge

the duties of our holy calling. It is far better to be obedient and humble; more meritorious to labor for God and to make sacrifices for Him than merely to enjoy his consolations. Who loves God sincerely, is not satisfied with giving Him his own heart, but is desirous of gaining for Him the love of as many hearts as possible. He would make all participants in the pure joys with which Jesus compensates His faithful servants.

Oh, that we would profit by the precious counsels offered us in this meditation! That like Magdalen we would correspond to the love of Jesus and thus worthily fulfill the injunction of the Lord, to serve Him in the poor, the sick and the children entrusted to our care!

Affections: O my Jesus, speak to my heart, as Thou didst speak to Magdalen: say but one word to me and a light shall flood my soul. I will recognize Thee, my beloved Master, and my soul will be inundated with heavenly transports. Thou wilt give me the peace that no one else can give. With the happy Magdalen prostrate at Thy feet, I adore Thee as my Saviour and my God, and pledge to Thee my love anew. Strengthened by Thy grace, I will make the souls redeemed by the Precious Blood participants in the heavenly treasures wherewith Thou hast replenished my soul that they, too, may know Thee and praise Thee for all eternity.

Resolution: In all my actions I will seek only the pleasure of God.

Spiritual Bouquet: "I have found Him Whom my soul loveth. I will hold Him and never more leave Him."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR FRIDAY

JESUS APPEARS TO THE HOLY WOMEN

"And they went out quickly from the sepulchre, with fear and great joy, running to tell His disciples. And behold, Jesus met them, saying: 'All Hail.' But they came up and took hold of His feet and adored Him. Then Jesus said to them 'Fear not. Go, tell My brethren that they go into Galilee; there they shall see me'" (Matt. 28, 8-10).

First Prelude: Picture the holy women kneeling at the feet of Jesus, and admire the mildness of the Lord in speaking to them.

Second Prelude: O Jesus, grant me grace to understand Thy goodness toward all who love Thee, and to promote Thy glory by my confidence and gratitude.

First Point

THE GOODNESS OF JESUS TOWARD THE HOLY WOMEN

While the women hurry back to carry out the injunction of the angel, Jesus meets them on the way. Oh, the tender solicitude of our Blessed Lord toward these women! He does not say to them as to Magdalen, "Do not touch Me." They are timid, and need encouragement. "Hail, fear not," he says to them, permitting them to embrace His feet and to give Him proofs of their love and reverence. Admire the goodness of Jesus. How well He knows our shortcomings and with infinite compassion adapts His graces to our weakness. Should we not confidently abandon ourselves to our Good Shepherd, Who so lovingly cares for every one of His sheep? Oh,

that with us as with the holy women love might triumph over fear! "Fear not!" Thus the Lord speaks also to us when we go cheerfully whither obedience bids us go. He is ever near us to bless our labors; now, as our Lord, to direct us; then, as our Father, to console us; again, as our Master, to instruct us, as our Friend, to encourage us. Let us in humility and confidence lay all our cares and worries at His sacred feet. We will remain near Him in holy recollection, especially when He comes to us in Holy Communion; we will embrace His sacred feet, so that nothing shall ever separate us from Him.

Let us beg the Lord to let us often hear the sweetly consoling words, "Fear not!" especially then when the thought of death and the judgments of God fills us with fear and anxiety! Animated with a childlike fear of God, we will love Jesus above all else, that we may approach our Divine Master with joy, when He shall reveal Himself to us in the splendor of His glory.

Second Point

JESUS BIDS THE HOLY WOMEN ANNOUNCE HIS RESURRECTION

Christ's commission to the holy women conveys an important lesson. Down through the ages He wills to honor these noble women who followed Him to Calvary and there consoled His loving Heart by their fidelity and devotedness. They persevered with Him while His chosen disciples, whom He had overwhelmed with graces, forsook Him. Now, when He is gloriously risen He instructs and consoles these humble souls, even before He appears to His Apostles. Yet, they are commissioned to announce the glad tidings to the Apostles. The almighty Lord loves to reveal Himself to the weak, and in His

goodness, wills to reward above all the love that is bestowed upon Him. For this reason Christ wills to manifest His resurrection, the treasures of His infinite love, to Magdalen and her companions.

How lovingly does not the Saviour prepare to comfort His disciples! He has commissioned Magdalen to bring them the joyful tidings. Now He sends the other women to them. To assure them of His perfect pardon, and to show them that He has forgotten their weakness, Jesus repeatedly calls the Apostles His brethren. How touching the love revealed in this word! They had acted as untrustworthy friends, as faithless servants, and Jesus calls them brethren. How good is the Lord to all that love Him! How little does He think of insults, of a guilt-laden past! Jesus wishes to be our brother, too. But how can we even be mindful of such condescension without casting ourselves at His feet, full of shame and confusion, and in bitterness of soul craving His pardon for the many infidelities of which we have been guilty? Could we ever hesitate to place all our trust in Him? Do we strive to imitate the love of Jesus, by forgetting injuries and requiting evil with good?

Affections: O Divine Saviour, Thou hast conferred even a greater favor upon me than upon the holy women. How often am I permitted to come to Thy Tabernacle, to kneel at Thy feet with loving reverence and receive Thee in Holy Communion! Oh, that I were always animated with the fervor of the holy women! My good Jesus, Who knowest all my needs and incessantly bestowest Thy most tender solicitude upon me, grant that I correspond to such countless proofs of Thy love. Give me an ever-increasing confidence in Thy infinite goodness, that, penetrated with lively gratitude toward Thee, I may exer-

cise heart-felt love and indulgence toward my neighbor, and thus render myself deserving of Thy greater grace and favor.

Resolution: I will frequently call to mind the presence of God, and with loving confidence turn to Him in all my needs.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Fear not, Go, tell My brethren that they shall see Me."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR SATURDAY

PETER AND JOHN GO TO THE SEPULCHRE

"Peter therefore went out, and that other disciple and they came to the sepulchre. And they both ran together, and that other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And when he stooped down, he saw the linen clothes lying: but yet he went not in" (John 20, 3-5).

First Prelude: Picture the two Apostles going in haste to the sepulchre.

Second Prelude: O my Jesus, may Thy holy love set my heart aglow, that, animated by a holy zeal, I may conscientiously discharge my religious duties.

First Point

THE ZEAL OF THE TWO APOSTLES

Peter and John having learned from Mary Magdalen that the Body of their beloved Master was no longer in the sepulchre, hurriedly started out for the place, without suffering themselves to be deterred by the incredulity of the rest of the disciples. Love accelerated their steps

and goaded them on to a holy rivalry. Souls that truly love God know no hesitancy and will not suffer themselves to be influenced by human considerations when there is question of drawing nearer to the object of their love. How necessary is such zeal in the service of God and of one's neighbor, especially in a religious congregation! By good example one should encourage the other to love the Saviour and to practice virtue. How pleasing to our Blessed Saviour is a religious community in which zeal predominates, and how happy those who live in such a community! They live in an environment that breathes naught but holiness, where everything reminds them of God and their eternal destination. They have continually before their eyes, models urging them irresistibly to the practice of virtue; they encourage one another mutually to constant fidelity to God in the faithful discharge of their sacred duties, thus resembling a fire whose warmth diffuses itself all around. What a source of blessing are zealous religious to Holy Church! Who can say what graces their prayers drawn down upon the world, or estimate the salutary effects of their exemplary lives!

Well for us, if we contribute toward supporting the fire of love in the hearts of our fellow-religious, by mutual edification. Let us frequently thank God for the many advantages afforded us as members of a religious congregation by intimate intercourse with Jesus, and let us prove our gratitude by striving perseveringly for the perfection of our holy state.

Second Point

THE TWO DISCIPLES AT THE SEPULCHRE

John hurried on, and arrived at the sepulchre before Peter, but did not enter—only when Peter had arrived

and entered, did he follow. Why such modest reserve on the part of the beloved disciple? For whom did he wait? He awaited Him whom Jesus placed over all and whom it behooved to act as the head. John, who himself narrates the incident, conveys an admirable lesson. Though Peter had sinned grievously by his three-fold denial of the Master, John, nevertheless, did not manifest the less respect and reverence for him as his superior. Thereby he teaches religious, in particular, to see in their superiors not mere human beings, subject to faults and imperfections, but God's representatives, remembering the words of our Blessed Saviour: "Who heareth you heareth Me, Who despiseth you, despiseth Me" (Luke 10, 16). How easily will those fail in the respect due to their superior who assume the right to observe and judge their conduct! God is jealous of the honor of His representatives, and has repeatedly shown in Holy Scripture how vigorously He punishes such as offend against the reverence due their superiors.

How much injury do such religious sustain! They close upon themselves the door through which the greatest blessings of religious life should come to them. The charitable admonitions and counsels of their superiors make no impression upon them. All that should serve to further truly humble and submissive souls in virtue, becomes for them a stumbling block, and serves but to aggravate their guilt. May we ever be irreproachable in this regard! May we always call God's blessing down upon our works by our respect, love and esteem for our superiors.

Affections: O my God, what gratitude do I owe Thee for my holy vocation to our religious congregation, in which I have before me so many examples of virtue. But

how ashamed am I to find myself still so lukewarm and indolent in Thy holy service! Ah, does such tepidity not proceed from my lack of love? I pray Thee, O my dear Saviour, increase in me the flame of divine love, replenish me with fresh zeal and courage that, no longer fettered by earthly affections, I may advance in the way of Thy commandments and reach the perfection which Thou in Thy infinite love hast destined for me. Give us all, O Jesus, the grace of mutual edification by the most humble submission to our superiors and by love and kindness toward one another, that thus we may contribute toward making of our community a most lovable abode of virtue, an object of the especial love of God.

Resolution: I will fulfill my duties zealously, and honor God's representatives in my superiors.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord: they shall praise Thee forever and ever" (Ps. 83).

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD OF SOULS

"And when He hath let out His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him, because they know His voice" (John 10, 4).

First, Prelude: Picture Jesus, the Good Shepherd carrying a lost sheep on His shoulders.

Second Prelude: O Jesus, Good Shepherd of my soul, let me understand how lovingly solicitous Thou art for

my salvation, that placing my entire confidence in Thee, I may follow Thee whithersoever Thou wouldst lead me.

First Point

THE GOOD SHEPHERD LEADS HIS SHEEP TO GOOD PASTURE

The whole human race in its blindness had strayed far from the path to heaven and wandered the way to perdition. Filled with mercy and compassion, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, came into the world to gather the scattered sheep of the house of Israel. "My sheep," He says by the prophet Ezechiel, "were scattered; because there was no shepherd; and they became the prey of all the beasts of the field, and were scattered. Behold I myself will seek My sheep and will visit them" (Ez. 34, 5, 11). How admirably has Jesus fulfilled His promise! Can He not truly say, "I am the Good Shepherd"? His whole life was devoted to the salvation of His sheep. For thirty years He labored in seclusion, preparing for them a truly fertile pasture in the fulness of the graces that His prayers and His holy conduct drew down upon the earth. To what degree has He not exhausted Himself for His flock in wanderings and admonitions, in difficulties and hardships during the years of His public ministry! Has He not immolated Himself as a bloody Victim on the cross? Does He not nourish His sheep with His own Flesh and Blood in the Sacrament of His Love?

We, who are so happy as to number among His elect sheep, experience the faithful Shepherd's care in a very particular manner. When we were in danger of losing our way in the turmoil of the world, did not He lure us lovingly into the fold the religious state? By His graces and enlightenments has He not overwhelmed us

with graces and prepared for us the most fertile pasture? Now He admonishes us gently, urging us sweetly by the Shepherd's crook, the cross, to follow Him, to forsake the ways of self-love, vanity and worldly distractions. He Himself guides us to the most fertile pastures, which lead to the eternal hills. How aptly, therefore, has the Psalmist said: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall want nothing." What has the Good Shepherd done for me in particular, and how have I corresponded to His grace?

Second Point

THE GOOD SHEPHERD DEFENDS HIS SHEEP

Jesus defends us far better than the best of shepherds can defend his sheep. In the gospel He tells us: "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep," and He has really given it for us. By His passion and death Jesus merited the graces and the light necessary to sustain us in the struggles of life. To such excess He loves His sheep. Does He not know full well with what powerful enemies we have to contend? It is true, we have been ransomed from the slavery of Satan by Christ's Precious Blood, but is our adversary not all the more anxious to recapture His prey? Playing the part of the roaring lion ready to devour us, he attacks us in open battle. Again he comes with the wilyness of the serpent to deceive us by his intrigues. Ought we not fear all from an enemy in open league with the deceitful world and our secret self-love? What would become of us if Jesus, the best of shepherds, did not protect us? Beneath the shadow of His Shepherd's crook we may confidingly attempt the combat with our enemies and walk unconcerned in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death. Even when,

through our own fault, we sustain a wound, it is the Good Shepherd Who lovingly provides for and heals us, through the reviving help of His Sacraments. He promised us by the prophet Ezechiel "I will seek that which was lost; and that which was driven away, I will bring again; and I will bind up that which was broken, and I will strengthen that which was weak, and that which was fat and strong, I will preserve, and I will feed them in judgment" (34, 16).

Oh, that we understood and valued rightly the happiness of having so good a Shepherd! He leads us here below along the thorny and cumbersome paths of eternal glory. Out of gratitude for His tender solicitude should we not cling to Him and seek to win other sheep for Him? Oh, that we loved our charges as Jesus loves us!

Affections: Divine Shepherd of our souls, how great is Thy love for Thy sheep! Thou goest to such excess as to offer Thy life for their salvation. In Thy prodigal compassion and love Thou leadest Thy sheep to the best pasture and defendest them against their enemies. Yes, O Divine Saviour, I recognize Thee as my loving Shepherd and thank Thee for having numbered me among Thy chosen flock. Oh, that I had always listened to Thy sweet voice and wholly surrendered myself to Thy guidance! O Jesus, pardon my indifference and infidelity. Henceforth I will constantly remain near Thee, my Good Shepherd, will rivet my eyes upon Thee and heed Thy divine counsels! As Thy faithful sheep I will follow Thee with implicit trust, tender love, and gratitude, on the way marked out for me by Thy infinite goodness.

Resolution: I will strive to know my Good Shepherd ever better, confidently entrust myself to Him and heed His voice.

Spiritual Bouquet: "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep.

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR MONDAY

JESUS APPEARS TO SIMON PETER

"The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon" (Luke 24, 34).

First Prelude: Picture St. Peter at the moment when he again beholds his Divine Master.

Second Prelude: O Divine Saviour, replenish my heart with the sentiments of humility, contrition, and love, that animated Thy Apostle on beholding Thee.

First Point

THE LOVE OF OUR LORD FOR PETER

After the reproachful, but mild and forgiving, glance of Jesus in the house of Caiphas had penetrated Peter, he did not cease, with the bitterest tears, to bewail his cowardice. Now Jesus wishes to console this humble penitent; Magdalen was the first among the women to behold the risen Saviour, so Peter was the first among the men vouchsafed such an extraordinary grace.

Two penitents were thus highly favored by our Divine Lord. Was it not that sinners might be moved to love our Lord the more, the more they had offended Him? Dare they not expect greater favors from Him if they serve Him with a contrite and humble heart? Oh, the admirable generosity of the Master! Hardly has He quit the tomb when He bids the women by the mouth of

His angel: "Go and tell my disciples and Peter that I will go before them to Galilee." Peter is mentioned by name, that he might not in the least doubt His Lord's fullest pardon; that having denied His Master he might know that Jesus, nevertheless, would not deny him. What sentiments may have swayed the heart of Peter on beholding His beloved Master? Oh, the happiness of the disciple on receiving from the lips of his Master assurance of pardon, which suddenly flooded his depressed spirit with the purest Easter joy!

Does not Jesus encourage us to boundless confidence through the mercy shown to Peter? Let us banish even the slightest temptation to mistrust. In imitation of our good Master let us, also, seek to bestow an especial love upon those who may have grieved or offended us.

Second Point

WHY WAS PETER VOUCHSAFED A SPECIAL APPARITION?

What profound wisdom lies at the bottom of this particular apparition! At the Last Supper Jesus had said to the Prince of the Apostles, in the presence of the rest; "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren" (Luke 22, 32).

Now the moment was come when Peter should be grounded in the faith that was never to be shaken. Jesus vouchsafed it to him in this hour. He convinced him of the truth of His resurrection, instructed him personally, and thus laid the foundation of His Holy Church. "And I say to thee; 'Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it'" (Matt. 16, 18). The Saviour will soon

appear to the other Apostles, and Peter, though especially favored, will also be among them to share in all the graces imparted to them. Having heard through Peter of the apparition, the other Apostles at once declared beyond doubt what they had formerly discredited when told them by the holy women. "The Lord has truly risen and appeared to Simon Peter," they said to the disciples, returning from Emmaus. Such respect and influence was accorded from the very beginning to the decision of Peter, the head of the Church. Good children of Holy Mother Church have from time immemorial displayed this same readiness to submit to the representative of Christ, the successor of St. Peter.

Let us thank God for having called us to the communion of saints on earth, for constantly vivifying and strengthening our faith through the Vicar of Christ in the Chair of St. Peter. Oh, the misfortune of those who have culpably forfeited this inestimable grace! Must we not with profound humility petition God to strengthen our faith ever more, that we may walk worthy of our holy calling as becomes devoted children of Holy Church! Let us prove our gratitude for the priceless gift of faith by praying fervently for those who have lost it.

Affections: Blessed be Thou, O God of goodness and mercy, that Thou didst appear to Thy penitent disciple, with Thy own lips to assure him of pardon and flood his soul with an abundance of peace and grace. Praised be Thy Divine Wisdom for manifesting to him before all others Thy glorious resurrection, the foundation of our holy faith!

O Holy Apostle, we offer thee our felicitations to the happiness of being so highly favored by thy Divine Master. Obtain for us the reverence and humility, the

burning and ineffable love that filled thy heart on beholding thy Lord and God. Confirm in us faith, hope, and gratitude, that we may say with Psalmist; "Bless the Lord, O my soul, Who forgiveth all thy iniquities, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion" (Ps. 102).

Resolution: I will strive to atone for my past faults by greater love.

Spiritual Bouquet: "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR TUESDAY

JESUS APPEARS TO JAMES

"After that, He was seen by James, then by all the Apostles" (Cor. 15, 7).

First Prelude: Represent to yourself the joy of St. James when he was favored with a special apparition of our Divine Lord.

Second Prelude: My risen Jesus, grant me the spirit of prayer and love for the interior, hidden life, that thereby I may become worthy of Thy especial friendship.

First Point

ST. JAMES RENDERS HIMSELF WORTHY OF A SPECIAL APPARITION OF OUR LORD BY HIS LOVE FOR THE INTERIOR, HIDDEN LIFE

In his letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul tells us that Jesus appeared to St. James and after that to all the Apostles. The holy Fathers ascribe such a distinction to the Apostle's great sanctity, his spirit of prayer, and

his love for the interior, hidden life. On account of his austere life, he was called the "Just." In the Temple almost without interruption, James was for all a model of profoundest reverence for the Divine Majesty. He sought in prayer consolation for the painful separation from his beloved Master. Jesus, not being able to withstand his intense longing, vouchsafed him an especial apparition. "The interior man," says the "Imitation," "often experiences interior consolation. If God seems to abandon him, to try him, he lovingly complains and will not rest until he has found the lost treasure."

The infinite lovableness of God has so captivated interior souls that He is their All. For religious, what a valuable asset is not this interior life! Without it, how difficult would Christ's yoke seem to them, how bitter His chalice and how futile their hardships and sufferings! Let us not imagine that the external occupations of our vocation, in accordance with obedience, in the least hinder the spirit of prayer. Have not saints proved by their example that energy and perseverance are great aids in fostering intimate union with God even in the midst of distracting occupations, provided these be undertaken in obedience for the glory of God?

Let us beg of St. James to assist us in acquiring the spirit of prayer and love for the interior, hidden life, of which one hour is worth more than all the pleasures of earth, and in virtue of which, alone, God's blessing will rest upon our exterior labors.

Second Point

SILENCE AND RECOLLECTION, AIDS TO THE INTERIOR LIFE

To acquire the interior spirit was ever the earnest endeavor of all true children of God. St. Paul testifies

this of himself when he says: "And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2, 20). If we desire Jesus to live in us, act in us, and suffer us to hear His voice in the depths of our soul, then we must imitate the saints. We must curb our senses. The eyes, ever desirous of seeing, are the windows of the soul, through which often death, or at least distractions, enter; the ever-open ears fill our souls with a world of news; the unbridled tongue robs the heart of piety and occasions many faults and imperfections. We aspire to being interior souls only in as much as we are modest in our looks, prudent in our words. The voice of God can be heard only when all is silent. Oh, that we might be numbered among the souls who, like St. James, seek always the presence of God, and find peace and true joy in confidential communion with Him! Our responsibility should be exceedingly great if, in religion, secluded from the world, overwhelmed with graces, we should not find Jesus in our innermost heart. How could we justify ourselves in the Day of Judgment? How many people living amid the distractions of the world lead more recollected lives than we! Will they not put us to shame on the Last Day? Let us be faithful in observing religious silence, the chief means offered us by our Holy Rule to achieve so desirable a result. Let us mutually support one another in its faithful observance by charitable admonitions, good example and prayer. Then, as Holy Scripture expresses it, we serve God in sanctity and justice, and truly walk before Him all the days of our lives.

Affections: O Divine Saviour, Whose delight it is to be with the children of men, may it be our sole delight to be in Thy holy Presence. Is there, in truth, genuine happiness without Thee? Alas, experience proves that

the soul is sad and dismayed when attached to creatures, living in distractions, and wandering astray among the vain things of this world. How wonderfully are the words of St. Augustine verified, that Thou hast created our heart for Thee and that it cannot find rest save in Thee! O my Jesus, endow Thy spouses with the gift of love for the hidden, interior life, the spirit of silence and prayer, that our convent may be for us an abode of peace and sanctity, and we thus lose none of the precious advantages that religious life offers in such generous measure.

Resolution: By silence and recollection, I will endeavor more and more to foster the spirit of prayer.

Spiritual Bouquet: "What have I in heaven but Thee, and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever" (Ps. 72).

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR WEDNESDAY

CHRIST'S DISCOURSE WITH THE TWO DISCIPLES ON THEIR WAY TO EMMAUS

"And He said to them: 'What are these discourses that you hold one with another, as you walk, and are sad' " (Luke 24, 17)?

First Prelude: Behold the two disciples on their way to Emmaus and Jesus in their midst.

Second Prelude: O Jesus, grant me the grace, solicitously to guard my tongue and to be humbly docile to Thy instructions.

First Point

JESUS ASKS THE DISCIPLES WHAT MANNER OF CONVERSATION THEY ARE HAVING

"What are these discourses you hold one with another, and why are you sad?" Jesus said to the two disciples. Oh, the love and sympathy of Jesus in this instance! Knowing that sadness hinders the operations of grace in their hearts, Jesus cannot bear to see His loved ones depressed. Oh, the baneful effects of dejection! Oh, the cunning of our enemy thus to ensnare devout souls and hinder so much good! What benefits should accrue to us if, after a fall, we would sincerely repent and with redoubled fervor resume the practice of virtue! Having learned from the two disciples the reason of their sadness, the King of Eternal Glory, Who on that day had conquered death, condescended to converse familiarly with those who had made His passion and death the subject of their conversation.

Can we not imagine Jesus addressing us similarly: What is the subject of your discourses, of your thoughts? What, the object of your desires? Oh, that with the disciples we were always able to say that we are conversing on edifying topics as it becomes religious, spouses of Christ! That no useless, uncharitable words should cross our lips, no vain or idle thoughts gain admittance to our hearts, and all our desires aim at fulfilling God's holy Will and securing our perfection! Shall we not have to render account for every idle word, on the Last Day? Let us forestall this account by exacting it of ourselves for every fault committed by misuse of the tongue. If we were occupied with God alone, what joy would then sway our heart! Would not the Saviour be near us and suffer us to taste the delights of communion with Him?

Second Point

JESUS ADMONISHES THE DISCIPLES

How harsh, seemingly, was our Lord's reproof! "O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24, 25). Christ's reproof, however, was only the outflow of His loving merciful Heart, prompted by His intense desire to instruct and console doubting and timid souls. Therefore, also, the disciples accepted this reproof from the apparent stranger without resentment, ill-will or contradiction. They even rejoiced that some one spoke to them of their good Master, and thus confirmed their weakened faith.

Let us here learn to be guided by love in all our corrections. Reproofs and admonitions are spiritual alms, and, like corporal alms, they must spring from those who have our welfare at heart, or whose duty it is to watch over us, remind us of our faults, that we may open our eyes to the dangers that threaten us. Many, however, resemble patients that bear a grudge against the physician who prescribes a bitter, but absolutely necessary remedy. Let us deem it a blessing in our religious community to be surrounded by friends who have our real interest at heart, and who, far from lulling us into a false security regarding our faults, seek to check our evil tendencies by prudent severity.

Are we always grateful for kindly counsel and advice? Have I not occasionally been over-sensitive when reprimanded? Am I at least humble enough not to have recourse to countless excuses, mindful that he who offers many excuses will never correct his faults?

Affections: I pray Thee, my Jesus, speak to me as Thou didst speak to the happy disciples; speak to my

mind, by imparting to it the knowledge of Thy doctrines, to my heart by inflaming it with the fire of Thy divine love. Give me humility and docility that I may profit by the counsels and admonitions of Thy representatives. I thank Thee, O Jesus, for having pointed out to me my defects, and at the same time the means and ways to amendment and betterment, to greater progress in religious perfection. Sustain me, O Beloved of my soul, with Thy powerful grace, that I may walk the ways of perfection with courage and perseverance.

Resolution: I will be attentive to the presence of God in my interior, and will gratefully accept the counsels that He imparts to me through His representatives.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR THURSDAY

THE DISCIPLES MISTAKE JESUS FOR A STRANGER

"Art Thou only a stranger in Jerusalem and hast not known the things that have been done there in these days" (Luke 24, 18)?

First Prelude: Imagine the two disciples in the presence of Jesus; they see Him, hear His words, but fail to recognize Him.

Second Prelude: Grant, O my Jesus, that I may earnestly strive to know Thee, my Divine Model, ever better, and always approach Thee with loving confidence.

First Point

THE TWO DISCIPLES RECOGNIZE JESUS

The evangelist tells us that "the eyes of the disciples were held," and that they did not recognize the Saviour, though He discoursed with them for some time. They called Him stranger, and in reality, they had been estranged from Him by their infidelity. Jesus hesitated to reveal Himself because they were not yet properly disposed to receive the graces offered them through the holy women. To lead them to a realization of their faults, Jesus willed to hear from their own lips their erroneous and wholly worldly conception of the promised Messiah.

Though Jesus in infinite love condescends to walk with us mystically through life, to be our guide and protector in this exile, He, nevertheless, remains a stranger to many even in our day, because they refuse to open the eye of faith, and close their inner ear to His grace. He must needs remain a stranger to them.

May He not remain estranged from us, His spouses; may we daily grow in His knowledge and love by fervor in meditation and by fidelity to the inspirations of grace. May we, even while at work, in accordance with our Holy Rule, persevere in the spirit of prayer, by keeping our eyes fixed upon our Divine Model. In imitation of many pious souls we will often ask ourselves: Are my thoughts words and actions in accord with those of my Divine Master?

Second Point

BENEFITS OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST

St. Augustine says that we do not love God because we do not know him sufficiently. We never bestow our

love upon a friend at once; on the contrary, our attachment grows as we discover lovable qualities in our friend. In like manner our love of God will grow proportionately as our knowledge of His goodness, His holiness and His perfections grows upon us. No one can ever fulfill the command of God, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind (Matt. 22, 37), unless he makes an effort to ponder the sublime attributes of Jesus Christ. If God demands love from all creatures how much more can He demand from His spouses! Has He not chosen them to give Him the greatest proof of love leading others to His knowledge and love? Woe, therefore, to those religious who, though they aim at acquiring all sorts of accomplishments which render them conspicuous in the eyes of the world, neglect meditation and their various religious duties, especially prayer! They are, indeed, foolish virgins, with no oil in their lamps, who must fear to hear the dreadful words: "Verily, I do not know you." Why is my love of Jesus so weak and inconstant? Is it not because I take little pains to know Jesus—the highest Good, the Source of all Good—ever better?

Affections: O my Jesus, with St. Augustine, I cry to Thee: "Grant me to know Thee that I may love Thee." Is it possible, O Jesus, for me daily to contemplate Thy beauty, Thy goodness and Thy sublime virtues, without being filled with confidence and love, without experiencing the desire to imitate Thy love, obedience, self-denial, and renunciation? Permit not, O Jesus, that my tepidity and infidelity estrange me from Thee and hinder the effects of grace in my soul. Grant me to be Thy faithful spouse, to walk in Thy presence, and thus to become a fit instrument in Thy hands to promote the salvation of souls.

Resolution: In order the better to know and love my Jesus, I will commune with Him by frequent ejaculations.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Let me know Thee, O Lord, that I may love Thee."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR FRIDAY

JESUS INSTRUCTS HIS DISCIPLES CONCERNING THE NECESSITY OF TRIBULATIONS

"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory" (Luke 24, 26)?

First Prelude: In spirit, accompany the two disciples and hear our Lord's wholesome instructions.

Second Prelude: O my Jesus, unfold to me the mysteries of Thy love hidden in the cross, that I may find therein light, strength, and consolation, in all sufferings.

First Point

"OUGHT NOT CHRIST TO HAVE SUFFERED THESE THINGS AND SO TO ENTER INTO HIS GLORY?"

How clearly the Eternal Wisdom has marked the way to everlasting glory! Christ's death on the cross had completely distracted the two disciples. They had cherished the fond hope that, as an earthly king, Jesus would found His empire in honor and renown. To disillusion them, the Saviour disclosed the plans of His infinite wisdom and love, told them that the heavenly Father had decreed to establish His Empire on the foundation of humility and self-renunciation.

If it was necessary for Christ to suffer so much to enter into His glory, even though the divine inheritance

was His by right of the Sonship of God, how much more necessary will it be for us to suffer, since our claim to heaven rests solely on God's mercy! But, like the disciples, we, too, are often dull and slow of comprehension when there is question of bearing sufferings and reverses in our holy vocation, even though we have declared our readiness, as disciples of Christ, to have a larger share in His cross. We should achieve the crown of martyrdom by fidelity to our vows and our Holy Rule. Would it not be the height of folly were we to think it possible to accomplish this by leading an effeminate, sensual life? Let us frequently recall the words of the Apostle, that the sufferings of this time are not to be compared to the glory to be made manifest in us. When crosses press on us, let this thought be our encouragement, and let us learn to love and cherish sufferings. They are marks of God's especial favor. Moreover, let us use every opportunity that presents itself to imbue others with love for the cross. It is the greatest favor we can confer on them, because the cross contains in itself the source of all consolation and merit.

Second Point

JESUS CONSOLES HIS DISCIPLES

When the disciples saw that by the death of Christ on the cross the hopes of Israel had been fulfilled, sorrow fled from their hearts and gave place to a holy fire, alluding to which, later, they said: "Did not our hearts burn within us when He spoke to us on the way, and explained the Scriptures?" (Luke 24, 32). Oh, the power of the word of Jesus! How happy is he who receives it and suffers himself to be penetrated by it! O my soul, listen

to the words of thy beloved Master! His words are words of fire, which enkindle our love and consume our faults and imperfections.

The subject of Christ's discourse with His disciples was His bitter passion and death; He revealed to them the profound depths of the mysteries of divine love and mercy. It is, therefore, not surprising that He set their hearts aglow with holy fervor and love. The devout contemplation of the bitter passion of Jesus awakens holy desires, strengthens magnanimous resolves, and transforms us so completely as to suffer us to taste the sweetness of the cross of Christ.

The passion of our dear Lord is an unfathomable ocean, full of pardon for the past, consolation for the present, and encouragement for the future. One glance at the crucifix is sufficient to teach the devout soul to value the cross more than all the riches of earth,—the most poignant humiliations, more than the applause of the entire world. Are these my sentiments?

Affections: O my beloved Saviour, Who didst will to enter into glory only through sufferings, let me taste the mystery of the cross. How could I, Thy spouse, desire to walk any other way than the way of sacrifice, of sufferings and humiliations, which Thou hast marked out for me! In future I will contemplate the sufferings and tribulations that befall me in the light of a lively gratitude and affection instead of discouragement. May they reanimate and quicken my confidence in the infinite wisdom and goodness of God. Let my soul, O Jesus, burn with an ardent desire to be intimately united with Thee through love and sufferings, and to seek in Thee my sole consolation, my peace and happiness.

Resolution: In all sufferings and reverses, I will be

mindful that the cross is for me the means of sanctification.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?"

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR SATURDAY

THE DISCIPLES ENTREAT OUR LORD TO STAY WITH THEM

"And they drew nigh to the town, whither they were going; and He made as though He would go farther. But they constrained Him, saying: 'Stay with us; because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent.' And He went in with them" (Luke 24, 28-29).

First Prelude: Behold the disciples urging our Blessed Lord to stay with them.

Second Prelude: O my Jesus, Who desirest to dwell in my heart, inflame it with Thy love, that I may seek and find my happiness solely in Thy presence.

First Point

JESUS PRETENDS TO GO FARTHER

When they drew nigh to the town, Jesus pretended to go farther, but the disciples urged Him to stay with them. Fascinated by the wonderful discourse of the stranger and completely enrapt by His amiability, they made vigorous efforts to persuade Him to stay with them. Not content with begging Him, as the gospel expressly states, "they constrained Him." Most likely they used a sort of violence by placing themselves before Him and barring the way. How gladly did Jesus yield to their urging,

His sole intention in pretending to go farther having been the desire to hear from His disciples the plea, "Lord, stay with us!"

Likewise, Jesus at times appears to be leaving us, but only that we may constrain Him by redoubled fervor in prayer, by greater confidence, by more profound humility, to manifest Himself to us and to comfort us by His visitations. In time of suffering, in sickness and danger of death, let us, therefore, often say, Lord, stay with us, to preserve us from impatience and discouragement, to teach us to praise and bless God for everything. Stay with us that faith may never waver, hope never grow dim, nor love grow cold. Lord, stay with us that night may not fall on our souls. Though the day of life wane, and we walk in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death, we shall fear no evil, because Thou, O Lord, art with us. Do I, as it were, use a holy violence with my Saviour when I fail to experience the bountiful effects of His presence?

Second Point

JESUS IS PERSUADED BY THE DISCIPLES

The pressing invitation of the disciples pleased the Lord and He yielded to their entreaties. How great was their delight and how did they strive to prepare the most agreeable reception for their Guest, Whom they had not yet recognized! Finally the moment had come when Jesus willed to reveal Himself to the two so slow of faith. Beyond a doubt, they had assigned Him the place of honor at the table, and according to custom, had asked Him to break the bread. As at the Last Supper, so now, Jesus took the bread into His hands and blessed it. At the moment in which He broke it to give it to them He

lifted the veil from their eyes and they recognized Jesus, risen from the dead. Well may they have fallen at His feet, full of awe and reverence. Well may their hearts have burned with ardent love, but no sooner had they recognized their Master than He disappeared. Quickly passing was the grace that Jesus offered His disciples, but it consoled and strengthened them. It was no longer possible for them to remain in Emmaus. In spite of the late hour, they immediately returned to Jerusalem. They must tell the Apostles, whose depression of spirit they had shared, that their Master lives and that they had seen and conversed with him.

We are so happy as to know Jesus when He comes to us in Holy Communion. How do we prepare His abode for Him? Does He find therein the sentiments of a living faith, profound humility, ardent love, and childlike confidence? Is there no obstacle to the operations of grace in my soul? If I do not derive from Holy Communion the strength and grace necessary to the faithful discharge of my duties, then I must admit that my preparation is lacking. With what have I to reproach myself in this regard?

Affections: O my Saviour, how often has it been Thy most ardent desire to come to me, to take up Thy abode in my heart, and to manifest Thy presence by special marks of affection and the sweetest impulses of Thy grace. My tepidity and coldness have stifled any longing on my part for Thy happy, blessed presence, and constrained Thee rather to abandon me. Pardon, O my beloved Jesus, such indifference. Let Thy heart be moved by my sincere compunction and humility, and be Thou moved by my fervent petitions, to enter into my heart with Thy grace and love, and transform it through the fire of the

Holy Spirit. "Stay with me, Lord," I will then say with the disciples, for I, too, will always remain with Thee; remain with me, for in Thee is the source of life; stay with me during my earthly pilgrimage, that I may one day attain to Thee and remain with Thee for all eternity.

Resolution: I will frequently entreat my dear Saviour to abide in me with His grace and love.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Stay with us, for the day is now far spent.

Prayer, O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

JESUS FOREWARNS HIS APOSTLES THAT TRIBULATIONS SHALL BE THEIR LOT

"Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (John 16, 20).

First Prelude: Behold our Divine Lord in the company of His disciples.

Second Prelude: Pray the Lord to teach you how to despise whatever does not tend toward Him.

First Point

THE PORTION OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD IN THIS LIFE

About to leave His disciples, Jesus bequeathed to them privations, persecutions, and manifold sufferings. "You shall lament and weep but the world shall rejoice."

How soon were the Apostles to experience the truth of these words! Their whole life, as it were, was an unbroken chain of trials, privations, and sacrifices, which they shouldered for the love of Jesus. Their fate is shared by all true servants of God, for they, too, must bear the imprint of the cross, the mark of their election. Such a life is exceedingly precious in the eyes of God, but mere folly in the eyes of the world, which judges only from appearances. Our Divine Saviour wills to sweeten every suffering borne for love of Him with the hidden Manna of the unspeakable divine consolations. Was this not the sweetness the Apostle tasted when he said: "I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation" (2 Cor. 7, 4)?

Attracted by this Manna, thousands choose the cross of religious life, of penance and the combat of their passions,—subject themselves to the hardships and discomforts found in the care of the infirm and the education of Christ's little ones. The greater their magnanimity in embracing the cross, the greater their share in the glory and the happiness Christ promised when He said: "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5, 5). How grateful should we be to the Holy Ghost for having given us grace to realize the vanity of the world and the happiness of the children of God! Let us beg Him for generosity in the service of God!

Second Point

JESUS ENCOURAGES HIS DISCIPLES BY HOLDING OUT TO THEM THE ETERNAL REWARD

Having announced to the Apostles the tribulations that would fall to their lot, Jesus said to them: "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy. I will see you again, and your

heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you (John 16, 22). Immeasurable, eternal joys are in store for the loyal followers of Christ. An imperishable crown shall be their portion in His Father's kingdom. There shall be neither tribulation nor sorrow, and all labors, all hardships and sacrifices shall find their just reward. Our Lord calls the time of probation for the just "a little while" and the Apostle observes that it is, indeed, momentary when compared with the eternal, all-surpassing glory.

Should these thoughts, which are grounded in our holy faith, not urge us on to the most heroic sacrifices? Even in religion we may experience dark hours in which the thought of heaven alone can sustain us. Let us, therefore, seek to penetrate more deeply into the mystery of the cross, that by the daily practice of mortification we may wax strong for greater burdens and sacrifices.

Affections: I thank Thee, O my Divine Saviour, for the light of Thy grace in which I have realized the value of sufferings and trials. Even here below tears shed for Thy sake are mingled with much sweetness, and promise to bear fruits of eternal joy. Confirm in us ever more the hope of the eternal, imperishable heritage,—the fruit of Thy passion—that neither labors, nor fatigue, neither sufferings nor sorrow and disgrace, can shatter our courage, or disturb our peace of soul. O my Jesus, replenish our hearts with so generous and powerful a love as burned in the hearts of Thy Apostles and martyrs, that we may endure the sorrows of this present life not only with resignation, but with a holy joy, deeming ourselves happy to bear closer resemblance with Thee, our Divine Model.

Resolution: We will unite our sufferings with those of Jesus and bear them cheerfully for love of Him.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR MONDAY

JESUS APPEARS TO HIS APOSTLES AND IMPARTS HIS PEACE

"Now whilst they were speaking these things, Jesus stood in the midst of them, and saith to them: 'Peace be to you; it is I; fear not'" (Luke 24, 36).

First Prelude: Behold the risen Saviour in the midst of the assembled disciples, wishing them peace.

Second Prelude: O my Jesus, give me grace to understand the excellence and the necessity of interior peace, that I may zealously strive to preserve and increase it in my heart.

First Point

JESUS IMPARTS PEACE TO HIS DISCIPLES

The first word Jesus spoke to His Apostles when He appeared to them on the evening of the resurrection, was: "Peace be to you!" Jesus well knew that peace is one of the greatest goods and that without it there is no true happiness. Christ had promised peace, He had earned it by His bitter passion, and now He imparted it to the Apostles, as the glorious fruit of His saving death. Jesus repeated His salutation to impress upon His own the inestimable value of peace. He commissioned them to carry it to the whole world, and imparted to them the

power to forgive sin, to administer the Sacrament of Peace, which effects the sinner's complete reconciliation with God, and restores peace to his soul.

Oh, how many souls have been raised to a new life during this paschal season! How many find peace when Jesus, by the lips of His minister, speaks to them: "Thy sins are forgiven Thee!" Let us thank the Divine Prince of Peace for such infinite love, and endeavor to draw new enlightenment, strength and consolation from the inexhaustible fount of graces opened to us in the Sacrament of Penance. Thus we shall participate in the plenitude of the Saviour's peace. Is it my aim to acquire perfect peace of heart by avoiding every voluntary fault?

Second Point

MEANS TO CONFIRM AND PERFECT THE PEACE OF GOD IN OUR SOULS

In the Old Testament, Job recognized the fundamental conditions for the maintenance of peace when he cried out: "Who hath resisted Him and found peace?" (Job. 9, 4). The more perfectly we fulfill the Will of God, therefore, the more perfect shall be our peace. Oh, that we understood this mystery, which is the foundation of the entire structure of our interior life! Souls possessed of true peace perceive the slightest approach of the tempter and repulse him vigorously; they observe their faults in order to correct them, and their good traits in order to perfect them. Such souls resemble a clear sky, unobscured by clouds of sorrow. Though they are compelled to struggle against their passions, their peace of soul is not disturbed. "Much peace have those that love Thy law," said David of old. Let us rejoice that it is so easy

for us in religion to preserve our conscience pure by observing the particular precepts of our Holy Rule and the statutes of our Congregation. How great the peace, how sweet the consolations of religious who observe their Holy Rule faithfully! In them there reigns in an especial manner the peace of Christ, of which the Apostle says that it staggers belief.

With what zeal, promptness and love do I observe my Holy Rule? Are not the unrest, the sorrow, and the aridity that often disturb my soul usually a result of my unfaithfulness?

Affections: O Divine Prince of Peace, not only to Thy Apostles didst Thou leave the precious gift of peace, but Thou didst leave it, also, to Thy faithful servants, as a secure heritage for all times. Couldst Thou have given us a more comforting assurance? How should it be possible for sorrow and misery to depress, or for trials to discourage, us, if the peace of Jesus Christ, surpassing all comprehension, dwells in our hearts? That it may always be my portion, I will endeavor to avoid carefully what might dim the purity of my soul. I will observe my Holy Rule with all possible fervor, as the expression of the Divine Will, and the law of His love, and will maintain interior and exterior tranquillity by holy recollection, at such a price to purchase the blessedness of inward peace by self-denial and complete surrender to the holy, amiable, and adorable Will of God.

Resolution: In order to maintain peace with God, I will scrupulously avoid the slightest act of unfaithfulness.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Lord, grant us Thy peace!"

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR TUESDAY

THE UNBELIEF OF THOMAS

"Now Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came" (John 20, 24).

First Prelude: In spirit behold the Apostles animatedly relating to Thomas the apparition of their risen Master.

Second Prelude: O Jesus, grant me true humility and great love for the practices of community life.

First Point

SINGULARITY OF THOMAS

On the night of Easter Sunday, Jesus appeared to His disciples and replenished their hearts with joy and consolation. Thomas was not with the Apostles on this occasion, and he thus forfeited the wonderful grace that rendered the others so exceedingly happy. Let us note how much we may lose by absenting ourselves from community exercises in order to indulge personal preference. "He who striveth to withdraw himself from obedience, withdraweth himself from grace; and he that seeketh particular privileges, loseth such as are in the common," says the author of the Imitation (B. 3, Chap. 13). It is not a rare occurrence to find religious guilty of the fault of the doubting Thomas. Some pass lightly over their religious duties, neglect community exercises, often only to indulge personal convenience and ill humor. How many graces do they forfeit by such conduct, and what a

bad example do they set their community! Let us take well to heart the admonition of St. Bernard: "Wilt thou be just? Then be solicitous to make thy whole life harmonize with the Rule, according to which thou hast made thy vows, and deviate neither to the right nor to the left from the prescribed exercises." How assiduously was the saint himself concerned to do this! If he was hindered from performing an exercise with the community, he sought to indemnify himself by rendering the lowliest services with profound humility, so as not to lose the blessing God attaches to participation in the community exercises. Thus, in all justice, his biographer could designate him the "most devoted friend of community life."

Am I convinced that God will be more indulgent with my imperfections at community exercises, by virtue of the fervor and zeal of my co-religious? Do I strive to compensate myself for necessary exceptions by greater humility and more perfect obedience?

Second Point

THE OBSTINATE UNBELIEF OF THOMAS

Although the holy women and disciples assured him "We have seen the Lord," and to make their testimony more credible even related all the details, Thomas refused to believe. He relied more on his own judgment than on the words of others. What obduracy, what stubbornness! In his presumption he even indicated the manner in which he would be convinced. We cannot realize that Thomas should have lacked the faith of his fellow-laborers. Had he not distinguished himself formerly by his spirit of sacrifice, when the other Apostles sought to dissuade Jesus from going to Bethany? Thomas cour-

ageously declared: "We will go with Him and die with Him" (John 11, 16). And now, having forfeited the graces imparted to the Apostles at Christ's first apparition, he fell from one fault into another, from obstinacy into obdurate unbelief and gross presumption.

Have we not learned from experience that one fault seldom stands alone? Have we not, likewise, learned that our enemy utilizes every moment of our unwarranted absence from community exercises by redoubling his attacks? Nothing seems more desirable to him than at such times to find us alone, and only too often he succeeds in luring us into repeated falls after the first one. Let us seek to evade his snares by prompt obedience and sincere humility. All truly humble souls mistrust their own judgment and are modest and cautious in their words; hence they possess peace of soul which qualifies them to impart this precious heavenly treasure to others. Have I not, by stubborn adherence to my views, frequently betrayed pride and self-love? What untold harm for myself and others has resulted from such conduct?

Affections: Divine Saviour, I thank Thee for the wholesome instructions imparted to me in this meditation. Preserve me from the spirit of singularity and stubbornness, which would rob me of the many graces attached to fidelity in community exercises. Grant me the grace to know myself and imbue me with the desire to submit in childlike simplicity to the direction of my superiors, and humbly to walk the way Thou hast traced for us in our Holy Rule and the constitutions of our Congregation. Let Thy hand guide me securely, that I may find peace and happiness in unreserved surrender to Thee, the portion of those that love Thee, O Highest Good, with all their hearts.

Resolution: I will endeavor to be prompt at all community exercises.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Where two or three are assembled in My name, I will be in their midst."

Prayer: Jesus, my Lord, my King . . .

MEDITATION FOR WEDNESDAY

JESUS APPEARS TO THOMAS AND THE OTHER APOSTLES

"And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst and said: 'Peace be to you.' Then He saith to Thomas: 'Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands; and bring hither thy hand, and put it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing.' Thomas answered and said to Him: 'My Lord and my God!' " (John 20, 26-29).

First Prelude: Behold the Apostle Thomas, full of shame and contrition, falling at the feet of His Master and loudly confessing his faith.

Second Prelude: Replenish my heart, O Jesus, with the sentiments that animated Thy contrite disciple, that I may strive to atone for my past faults by redoubled zeal.

First Point

THE LOVE OF JESUS FOR THOMAS

For a whole week Thomas persevered in his unbelief, and who can tell how long he might have remained hardened had not the love of Jesus conquered him. We,

too, are prone to fall and persevere in sin, but we cannot rise without the assistance of God's grace. Oh, the wonderful goodness of God, which has so often raised us after a fall! Jesus takes the first step to win back the guilty disciple and affords him an opportunity to make public reparation, by humble repentance, for the public scandal, that his conversion might be complete and exemplary.

It seems as though this apparition was for the sole benefit of Thomas. To him Jesus addressed Himself with the kindest words fulfilling even his seemingly importunate request. "Come," Jesus says to Him, "put thy finger hither, and see My hands; and bring hither thy hand and put it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing." How touching is not the love of Jesus! What punishment could He have meted out to Thomas for such a gross fault! What penance might He not have imposed! Let us never fear to approach Jesus after having committed a fault. We see in this instance how lovingly He seeks the lost sheep. How could He reject those who come to Him contrite, humbly confiding in the goodness of His paternal love! But at the same time we will treat our erring neighbor lovingly and guard against passionate self-indulgence, especially when admonishing him. We shall try in vain to correct the faults of others if, while administering a reproof, we offend God through lack of meekness. Jesus stakes all to reclaim a single strayed soul. Could we remain cold and indifferent at the sight of danger threatening one of our charges?

Must I not fear to grieve the Sacred Heart of Jesus more by my lack of confidence than by my faults? What is my conduct toward those who have offended me?

Second Point

THOMAS ATONES FOR HIS FAULT

The splendor of the risen Saviour, His inexpressible goodness, the loving words that fell from His lips had, in a single moment, completely transformed the heart of the Apostle. Beside himself, he could utter only the words: "My Lord and my God!" But these few words voiced his sentiments. If he was mindful of his fault, he was moved to compunction and self-abasement; if he thought of the meekness and indulgence of Jesus toward him, though he had merited His displeasure, the most fiery love was enkindled in his soul. The thought of our sins and of the mercy of God should call forth in us similar sentiments of contrition and love. Let us learn from the efficacy of this short prayer that many and eloquent words do not necessarily constitute the essence of prayer, but that all depends upon one's disposition of mind and heart. Short prayers, devoutly said, exert more power over the Heart of Jesus than longer ones lacking true fervor. Let us seek through lively faith to walk in the presence of God that our prayers may become more perfect. Such faith of which Jesus says: "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed" is an especial gift of God. Imitating the example of the Apostles, when they said: "Lord, increase in us Thy faith," we must constantly pray for an increase of faith.

Is my faith, perhaps, still weak, unfruitful in good works of sanctity and zeal for souls? Do I frequently pray that my faith may be strengthened and increased?

Affections: O my Jesus, I, too, recognize Thee as my Lord and my God. Animated with the sentiments of humility and contrition, of submission and hope, of love

and devotion, which filled the heart of Thomas, I adore Thee with profoundest reverence. Accept my sentiments with complacency and grant me with the perfect pardon of my sins, a more firm and living faith that I may be rendered worthy to reap the blessing Thou hast attached to faith. Grant me grace to perform all my works in the spirit of faith, that trusting and confiding in Thee, I may overcome every obstacle and finally conquer self. Humbly confident, I will hasten to Thy Sacred Wounds, these sources of grace and salvation, and draw from them the ardent, powerful and self-sacrificing love which Thy Apostles drew from them, that by redoubled fervor I, too, may make amends for my past transgressions and my insufficient love.

Resolution: As soon as I am conscious of a fault I will return to my Saviour, contrite, and with unbounded trust promise Him to perform the following action with redoubled zeal.

Spiritual Bouquet: "My Lord and my God!"

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR THURSDAY

JESUS APPEARS TO HIS DISCIPLES ON THE SHORES OF LAKE GENESARETH

"Simon Peter saith to them: 'I go a fishing.' They say to him: 'We also come with thee.' And they went forth, and entered into the ship, and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus therefore said to them: 'Children, have you any meat?' They answered Him: 'No' " (John 21, 3-6).

First Prelude: In spirit, visit the shore of Genesareth; see the Apostles casting out their nets in vain and Jesus standing on the shore, lovingly conversing with them.

Second Prelude: Grant me grace, O Jesus, to sanctify all my labors by obedience and the good intention, that they may become fruitful for the salvation of souls and merit an everlasting reward.

First Point

THE FRUITLESS LABORS OF THE DISCIPLES

Obedient to the injunction of the Lord, the disciples had gone to Galilee, there to be vouchsafed a new apparition of their Divine Master. To flee idleness and to earn their daily sustenance, they engaged in their usual occupation—fishing—a rather laborious task. They sacrificed their rest, and labored assiduously all night. God's Providence has so ordained that all men must labor to live; all must earn their daily bread in the sweat of their brow. Religious are not exempt, and those who are called to exercise the works of mercy must, in a particular manner, immolate themselves whole-heartedly, at the cost of supreme effort, to this duty. Do we bear in mind that we shall one day have to render a strict account of the disposition of our time, of our strength, and our faculties? The Apostles had labored all night fruitlessly and taken nothing. God, Who had destined them to be fishers of men, would show them how little their talents and efforts could avail for the salvation of others if not supported by the assistance and blessing of God.

We, too, have been vouchsafed the inestimable grace of being called to the apostolate. We, too, have the sub-

lime vocation of laboring for the salvation of souls. We do this in a particular manner by discharging the duties of our holy vocation with patience, meekness and love. Let us not rely on our own strength and zeal, but solely on the grace of God, that our labors be not fruitless. Let us consider the words of the Apostle: "Therefore, neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase" (1 Cor. 3, 7).

We must strive to sanctify our labors by uninterrupted prayer, and perform them with the good intention in the presence of Jesus, that His blessing may fructify them and enrich us with countless merits for heaven. How often have my labors been in vain because of my failure to sanctify them by the good intention?

Second Point

THE OBEDIENCE OF THE APOSTLES

At daybreak Jesus stood on the shore but the Apostles did not recognize Him. He said to them: "Children, have you any meat?" They answered Him: "No." He said to them: "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find." In spite of His tender words, calling them "children," Jesus was not yet recognized by the disciples. He well knew that the Apostles had labored in vain and that they were completely exhausted and fatigued, but, before aiding them miraculously, He would hear from their own lips the confession of their utter helplessness. We, too, provided we are sincere and cling to Him with childlike love and devotion, are objects of the Saviour's most tender love. How often does He inwardly remind us of the needs of our soul and urge us, as it were, zealously to implore His assistance, that in

answer to the humble confession of our spiritual poverty He may pour out upon us more generously the treasures of His grace. The Apostles cast out their nets without delay and were rewarded with a generous draught. Thus God will bless all our actions if they bear the mark of obedience. On the contrary, whatever is performed from mere preference and self-will, shall fail.

In imitation of the Apostles, we will promptly obey the voice of him who speaks to us in the name of God. In the spirit of faith, we will subject ourselves unreservedly to those who hold God's place in our regard. We will obey them willingly, cheerfully and perseveringly, with childlike simplicity, taking no heed either of interior repugnance or private opinion. "All things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9, 22), and "an obedient man shall speak of victory" (Prov. 21, 28), we read in Holy Scripture.

Has my experience not frequently testified to the truth of these words? Do I habitually obey in a spirit of faith, prompted by supernatural motives, and is my obedience, consequently, rendered cheerfully and whole-heartedly?

Affections: O Divine Saviour, must I not fear that my labors for the salvation of souls have been useless and without merit for heaven? Alas, I have forgotten Thy words: "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15, 5). Prompted by vain self-confidence and relying on my own strength, I have neglected to labor in Thy presence and to commend my work to Thee by fervent prayer. I humbly acknowledge my weakness and inefficiency, O my Saviour. I will have recourse to Thy Omnipotence with implicit trust, will the more securely rely on Thy assistance, the more miserable I am. Humbly submissive to all who command in Thy name, I will expect of Thee

the blessing Thou so generously impartest to obedient souls.

Resolution: I will perform all my actions in a spirit of faith and love.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Without Me you can do nothing."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR FRIDAY

JESUS MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN TO HIS DISCIPLES

"That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved, said to Peter: 'It is the Lord.' Simon Peter, when he heard that it was the Lord, girt his coat about him, and cast himself into the sea" (John 21, 7).

First Prelude: Behold the Apostles in the ship and Jesus near them on the shore.

Second Prelude: O my Jesus, grant me a pure and love-inflamed heart that I may find joy in Thy divine presence and glorify Thee by my works.

First Point

JOHN IS THE FIRST TO RECOGNIZE THE BELOVED MASTER

Though Jesus had at an earlier date worked a similar miracle for His Apostles, nevertheless, at first, they knew Him not. Only the eye of the virgin disciple penetrated the mystic veil which enveloped his Lord, and he called out to Peter: "It is the Lord." Here we see confirmed

the words of our Saviour: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5, 8). Would you, my soul, recognize Jesus, feel His nearness, receive His inspirations and graces, then you must be solicitous to preserve and increase purity of heart. With the Psalmist often say: "A clean heart create in me, O God!" But avoid scrupulously the least faults and imperfections, and be zealous in the practice of mortification and retirement. Then, like the beloved disciple you, too, will be the object of the especial love of Jesus by virtue of purity of heart. Only in so far as your heart is purified and chastened, will it be receptive for the fire of divine love.

The virgin disciple was at the same time, the beloved disciple of our Blessed Lord. He had imbibed love in its proper source, namely, the Heart of His loving Master, which love, in turn, made it possible for him to recognize the nearness of the Beloved. "He that loveth Me," said our Lord, "I will love him and will manifest myself to him" (John 14, 21). The eye of love detects everywhere the secret operations of Divine Providence. It recognizes in all occurrences the loving guidance of God's fatherly wisdom and goodness. A soul loving God, confides cheerfully and with childlike trust in His loving direction and guidance and always thinks at heart: The Lord has imposed this trial on me for my sanctification. The Lord enlightens me in prayer, impels me to strive for greater perfection, encourages me to immolate myself without reserve, invigorates and strengthens me. I will follow Him and purify my heart more and more with the aid of His grace, that, loving Jesus more ardently, I may attain to permanent union with Him.

Second Point

PETER CASTS HIMSELF INTO THE SEA TO MEET JESUS

Hardly had Peter heard the words: "It is the Lord" when he desired to be with Him. Although the ship was quite near the shore, Peter cast himself into the water to reach Jesus without delay. His love permitted not a thought of the dangers to which he was exposing himself—the ardent desire to be with Jesus alone filled his soul. How marvelous are the effects of divine love described so beautifully in the Imitation: "Love often knoweth no measure, but groweth fervent above all measure; love would willingly do more than it can, because it conceiveth that it may and can do all things. It can achieve anything; and it doth perform and effect many things, where he that loveth not, doth faint and fall prostrate" (Bk. 3, Chap. 5). How necessary is it not, when practicing works of charity, to arm ourselves with courage and confidence, to expose ourselves courageously and cheerfully to the difficulties and dangers encountered in our holy vocation, solely that we may fulfill the holy Will of God. Let us, then, like Peter cast ourselves into the ocean of labors and sufferings, and renouncing generously all comfort and convenience, labor untiringly in the interests of our Blessed Lord. Countless saints have done likewise, and many of our fellow religious are worthy models of the heroic love which forgets self and sacrifices all in the endeavor to attain perfection and intimate union with God.

By fervent prayer and constant fidelity in the daily exercise of mortification we will seek to increase the love of God in our hearts that it may move us to a holy zeal, capable of doing all things with the grace of God. In

the difficulties and trials of my holy calling, have I experienced that love gives strength for all things, or have I, on the contrary, yielded to discouragement and dejection?

Affections: O my Divine Saviour, what admirable models hast Thou given to us in Thy two disciples! The tender love of the virgin disciple recognized Thee first, and Peter's fiery zeal induced him to overcome all obstacles to reach Thee. Ah, when will a spark of this pure and ardent love enkindle my heart, enlighten my understanding, sanctify my actions! O my beloved Jesus, I implore Thee, create a clean heart in me, cleanse me more and more of my sins, give me a truly humble, submissive and love-inflamed heart, that I may adore Thee in all Thy loving dispensations, love and praise Thee and seek my sole happiness in the accomplishment of Thy holy Will.

Resolutions: I will strive to testify my love to my Saviour by purity of heart and generous immolation of self in the service of God.

Spiritual Bouquet: "The disciple whom Jesus loved, said to Peter: 'It is the Lord.'"

Prayer. Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR SATURDAY

JESUS PREPARES A REPAST FOR HIS DISCIPLES

"As soon then as they came to land, they saw hot coals lying, and a fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith to them: 'Bring hither of the fishes which you have caught.' Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land,

full of great fishes, one hundred and fifty-three. And although there were so many, the net was not broken. Jesus saith to them: 'Come, and dine.' And none of them who were at meat durst ask him: 'Who art Thou?' knowing that it was the Lord" (John 21, 9-13).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus inviting His disciples to partake of the repast, and Himself serving them.

Second Prelude: O my Saviour, give me a better realization of Thy goodness and love, that I may be more solicitous to render myself worthy of it.

First Point

JESUS PREPARES A REPAST FOR HIS DISCIPLES

Having left their ships, the disciples found a fire kindled and a fish frying over it, and some bread. Thus Jesus proved Himself again the loving Father of the house, who provides the necessary nourishment for His children, weary after hard labor. To afford them the pleasure of tasting of the fruits of their own hands, He said: "Bring hither of the fishes which you have now caught." Simon Peter, the first in his fiery zeal, pulled the net full of big fishes to the shore. How admirable is the love of Jesus in this instance! "Bring hither of the fishes which you have now caught" this benign Master said, as though the generous draught had been the reward of their exertions. In like manner, Jesus deals with us even today. Our actions derive their merit primarily from the infusion of sanctifying grace and the influence of actual grace on our understanding and will. Nevertheless, God proportions His reward to the degree of our exertion, as though He would leave us under the happy impression that we ourselves are the authors and

source of our joy and good fortune; whereas, as St. Augustine so beautifully expresses it, "He crowns His own gifts in us." May we never prove ungrateful for such loving condescension on the part of God, that it may at the same time serve us to humble ourselves and in the conviction of our unworthiness to say with the Apostle: "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15, 10).

Do I strive to imitate the tender love of our Blessed Lord by gladly denying myself in favor of others? Am I happy when others enjoy the fruits of my endeavors, and receive the recognition that I believe to have merited? Have I not frequently, on the contrary, sought praise and recognition?

Second Point

JESUS SERVES HIS APOSTLES DURING THE REPAST

Jesus knew quite well that His Apostles were completely exhausted with labor and tormented by hunger, therefore, He said to them: "Come and eat." And with His divine hands He, Himself, waited on them during the meal. Who should not here admire the infinite love of Jesus! While they were busy at work, His inventive love prepared for them the strengthening repast. This generosity condescended to the lowliest services; and His disinterestedness waited eagerly to gladden the heart of the Apostles. To replenish their strength, so necessary for the accomplishing of greater undertakings, Jesus lovingly provided refreshment and consolation for the fatigued disciples.

The Lord deals in like manner with all who are lovingly devoted to Him. He not only affords them interior and spiritual consolation, but frequently compensates them for their labors by exterior and material comforts. In

a truly fatherly manner He provides for all their needs and gives them even beyond their desires. His divine goodness, however, is manifested most wonderfully in the Eucharistic Banquet, which in infinite love, He has instituted for our nourishment and support in the difficulties and trials of life. May we always approach this heavenly Banquet with sentiments of profound humility and heartfelt gratitude, animated with holy joy and love, in the realization of the infinite mildness and liberality of Jesus, our beloved Saviour!

If we are chosen to serve our Lord in the person of the poor, the suffering, the children entrusted to our care, let us acquit ourselves of such a noble charge generously and wholeheartedly, counting naught as irksome or difficult in the service of charity. Let us do this affably, bestowing our gifts in a kindly manner to comfort the poor. Is it my aim to prove my gratitude for the immeasurable goodness and the countless benefits Jesus lavishes upon me, by performing the duties of my vocation with love and kindliness?

Affections: I thank Thee, most benign Jesus, for Thy loving solicitude for Thy creatures, especially those consecrated to Thee. How happy are we to be beloved by so magnanimous a God, so tender a Father, so loving a Bridegroom! Oh, that we would proclaim Thy superabounding goodness to the whole world, and glorify Thee in our every word and work! Divine Saviour, Who so often in the Holy Eucharist dost overwhelm our souls with reverence and humility, inflame our hearts with the fire of Thy divine love, that it may consume whatever is imperfect in us, and wholly transform our affections and tendencies, that Thou mayest live in us and we may constantly live in Thee.

Resolution: I will honor my Saviour in the person of my companions in religion and those entrusted to me, and will manifest goodness, affability and indulgence toward them.

Spiritual Bouquet: "And Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them."

Prayer. O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

JESUS SPEAKS TO HIS DISCIPLES OF HIS DEPARTURE

"But I tell you the truth; it is expedient to you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And when He is come, He will convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment" (John 16, 7-8).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus in the Cenacle, conversing with the disciples about His ascension and the descent of the Holy Ghost.

Second Prelude: Enlighten my soul, O God, with the light of the Holy Spirit, that in all things, I may recognize Thy Divine Wisdom and Goodness, and cleanse my heart of all earthly affections.

First Point

THE WORDS OF JESUS, "IT IS WELL FOR YOU THAT I GO"

Having heard from the lips of their Divine Master that He was about to leave them, the Apostles were seized with fear and depression. Jesus compassionated and con-

soled them affectionately. Adapting Himself to their weakness, He spoke not of the glory awaiting Him in heaven, but only of the blessings and the benefits that His going should bring to them. Even to the last moment of His visible presence on earth, Jesus forgot Himself, as it were, only to think of us. "It is good for you that I go," He said to His Apostles. The "going" of Jesus helped them to perfect their faith and hope and to chasten their love. While Jesus was with them, they still expected an earthly kingdom in which they should hold the positions of honor. As children upon their father, they relied in all things upon their Master, and their virtue should never have waxed strong, nor their zeal have increased, had Jesus remained with them.

Occasionally God deprives us, also, of a visible support, which seems to us indispensable. We must leave an appointment, a person, and at once we are dejected, confused, and see in this loss an impediment to our progress in virtue. Our infinitely loving Father, however, knows what is salutary and necessary for us. He permits what is painful only for our benefit, to purify our intentions and to furnish us with opportunities for the practice of virtue. Let us learn, at last, to submit cheerfully to the dispensations of Divine Providence and instead of sorrow, peace will reign in our hearts.

Recalling many an incident of my past life must I not say with fullest conviction: It is good for me that God disposed and directed all as He did? It was good for me that He did not fulfill a certain wish of mine which so occupied my mind, that He subjected me to such and such a trial, which I dreaded so much?

Second Point

THE HOLY GHOST, THE COMFORTER, WILL CONVINCE THE WORLD OF SIN, OF JUSTICE, AND OF THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD

These words found their fulfillment on the feast of Pentecost. Fortified by the strength of the Holy Spirit, Peter convinced the Jews of sin to such an extent that they cried out with contrite hearts: "What shall we do, men and brethren?" (Acts 2, 37), and three thousand sought baptism on the same day in order to be cleansed of their sins. Such is the victory achieved by the Holy Ghost in the Church over the world. In like manner, He vanquishes evil in our hearts, provided we co-operate with grace. The Spirit of Holiness upbraids us with the least sin, corrects and adjusts our perverse judgments, and gives us a clear insight into our weaknesses and defects. In hearts submissive to Him, He entertains a lively detestation of even the most trifling faults, joined with profound humility, uninterrupted vigilance, and the firm resolve to avoid all dangerous occasions. If we have sinned, the Holy Spirit comes to our aid, that we may repent of our sins and not suffer them to become an impediment to the operations of divine grace. How grateful ought we not be for His enlightenments, His inspirations and divine counsels! But how solicitously ought we to utilize such exceptional graces! We should frequently ponder the terrible account that shall one day be exacted of us at the judgment seat of God. The Lord will judge with all the rigors of justice those whom He overwhelmed with His graces, but who have, nevertheless, abused them and thus encumbered themselves with such a tremendous responsibility.

Must I not fear the judgment if I transgress my Holy Rule lightly, exercise little vigilance over my senses and take little thought to repair my known transgressions by sincere compunction?

Affections: O my Jesus, when shall perfect love of Thee fill my heart? Alas, I admit that my earthly tendencies hinder me from being wholly Thine, from loving and praising Thee in all Thy dispensations. Come, O Holy Ghost, with Thy divine light and convince my soul of its weaknesses. Give me courage and strength to vanquish self, to throw off the yoke of created things, and unceasingly to aspire to heaven. Forsake me not, O Spirit of Truth and Holiness, despite my past infidelities, which have rendered me wholly undeserving of Thy divine guidance. I offer Thee a docile and receptive heart, desiring nothing save to be wholly Thine by the bonds of a pure and perfect love, and to be guided solely by Thee.

Resolution: I will carefully cleanse my heart of everything that could hinder the effects of the Holy Ghost.

Spiritual Bouquet: "If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR MONDAY

JESUS CONFERS UPON PETER THE OFFICE OF SUPREME SHEPHERD

"When therefore, they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter: 'Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?' He saith to Him: 'Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.' He saith to him: 'Feed My lambs.'

He saith to him again: 'Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?' He saith to Him: 'Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.' He saith to him: 'Feed My lambs.' He saith to him the third time: 'Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?' Peter was grieved, because He had said to him the third time, 'Lovest thou Me?' and he said to Him: 'Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.' He said to him: 'Feed My sheep' " (John 21, 15-17).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus, with inimitable meekness, asking Peter: "Lovest thou Me?"

Second Prelude: Impress Thy love so deeply on my heart, O Jesus, that all my actions may testify mine to Thee.

First Point

JESUS DEMANDS GREATER LOVE OF PETER

Peter was called to hold a prominent office among the Apostles. Jesus willed to commit to him the full charge of His flock; therefore He must needs demand greater love of Peter. By asking him: "Simon, lovest thou Me more than these?" Jesus permitted Peter to make a confession of his love in the presence of the other Apostles. Had Jesus asked Peter this question at an earlier day, Peter should very likely, without hesitation, have declared that he loved Him more. Had he not in the Supper Room declared that he would remain true to our Lord though all the rest should forsake Him? Sad experience had taught him to be more prudent, and, in all humility, he was careful not to set himself above the other disciples. He, therefore, answered not, "Yes, Lord, I love Thee more than these," but merely "Yes, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee!" We, too, by virtue of our holy vocation, must aspire to great perfection, great sanctity and

love. God's goodness has called us to a congregation devoted to the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Does our love in reality harmonize with the sanctity of our state of life? Does not Jesus often demand a confession of our love in the presence of our fellow-religious or our charges, if not in words, at least in the many occasions He furnishes us for sacrifice? He seems to say: Lovest thou Me? Then carry the cross of community life in all its details. Lovest thou Me? Then shoulder the hardships ordinarily inseparable from the care of the sick and the instruction of youth. Lovest thou Me? Then be obedient, humble, meek and gentle. Lovest thou Me? Then observe the rule of silence, be recollected and zealous in prayer and meditation.

What do I most frequently answer Jesus by my actions? Dare I presume to love Him more than others, who have not received so many graces? How deplorable were it not, if to our Lord's question: "Lovest thou Me?" I should be obliged to answer: Lord, Thou knowest that I love myself, my comfort and convenience, that I seek honor and the vain praise of creatures.

Second Point

JESUS REPEATS HIS QUESTION THE SECOND AND THE THIRD TIME

By the repeated question: "Lovest thou Me?" Jesus willed to teach us that love must be persevering. The demands of love are not satisfied by merely saying in moments of fervor, "My God, I love Thee," but love must constantly burn in our hearts. We must, therefore, nourish the fire of love by means of fervent aspirations and prayers, by the faithful observance of the commandments and the counsels, by the practice of good works,

but above all, by the conscientious discharge of our duties. Having been asked the third time, "Lovest thou Me?" Peter remembered his three-fold denial of the Master and became sad. Utterly distrusting his own heart, he answered: "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." No sooner had Peter atoned for his base denial by this humble confession, than Jesus fulfilled a promise made to Peter at an earlier day, to give him the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, that is to entrust to him the administration of His Church. By this sacred trust Peter was likewise enabled to discharge the commission confided to him with the words: "But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren" (Luke 22, 32). Jesus confided this sacred office not to the virgin disciple, John, but to the penitent Peter, to convince us of the love and compassion with which He receives a contrite and humble heart. Was ever goodness like to the goodness of Jesus?

Should not the remembrance of my former sins incite me to greater penance, to more profound humility, to persevering fidelity? Have I confessed the Lord by my works of love and zeal for souls, as often as I formerly perhaps denied His love by my sinful deeds?

Affections: It is true, O my Saviour, that I have frequently offended Thee. I have rendered myself undeserving of Thy friendship and Thy grace. I repent of my sins in all sincerity of soul and desire to atone for them by profound humility and persevering zeal. Such a sincere desire encourages me to say, with St. Peter: Lord Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee, that I desire to love Thee more and more. Tear away my heart from every other love, cleanse it of every inordinate inclination, that Thy holy love may replenish it with in-

creased fervor and constancy. Grant me grace to show my love for Thee by renewed fidelity to the duties of my state of life.

Resolution: I will endeavor to manifest my love of my Divine Lord by self-immolation to the cause of Christian education.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee!"

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR TUESDAY

JESUS ANNOUNCES TO PETER HIS DEATH BY MARTYRDOM, AND BIDS HIM FOLLOW IN HIS FOOTSTEPS

"Amen, amen, I say to thee, when thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself and didst walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldst not. And this He said, signifying by what death He should glorify God. And when He said this, He saith to him: 'Follow Me.' Peter turning about, saw that disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also leaned on His breast at supper, and said: 'Lord, who is he that shall betray Thee?' Him, therefore, when Peter had seen, he saith to Jesus: 'Lord, and what shall this man do?' " (John 21, 18-22).

First Prelude: Hear Jesus bidding Peter follow Him, and lovingly admonishing him.

Second Prelude: Grant me grace, O Jesus, to lose no time in idle curiosity and useless occupations, but to strive

with all my strength to follow Thee on the path of humility and self-denial.

First Point

JESUS FORETELLS THE MARTYRDOM OF PETER

Peter had thrice testified his love for the Divine Saviour, still, mindful of his past fall, he was not without apprehension for the future. Our Blessed Saviour, discerning the mind of the disciple, willed to calm and quiet him. He, therefore, assured Peter of His undying love, by foretelling him that he should resemble his Saviour by the immolation of his life, yes, even by his death on the cross. An exceedingly painful death should be the reward of Peter's fidelity. Let us take well to heart that patient carrying of our cross is the touchstone of our love of Jesus. Let us learn to esteem the cross as a mark of God's especial love for us, and as a means wherewith to make Him some return. When Jesus said: "Thou didst gird thyself and didst walk where thou wouldst . . . but another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldst not," He alluded to two kinds of crosses. We can shoulder various mortifications and penitential exercises voluntarily, as it were, girding ourselves for the love of Jesus. Who should not feel strongly impelled thereto in religious life! But at the same time, we must suffer ourselves to be girded by others, by suffering patiently and with resignation the trials, the persecutions and the sufferings ordinarily inseparable from the faithful discharge of our duties. "Follow Me," said the Lord to Peter. Peter should constantly have before him the example of His Lord and Master, Who Himself first suffered death on the cross, that the disciple, too, might willingly bear the cross and die thereon.

"Follow Me," the Saviour said also to me. Why, then, do I carry my cross so reluctantly? Would not my love of Jesus grow stronger and my cross become lighter, were I to rivet my gaze more frequently upon my Saviour?

Second Point

JESUS REBUKES PETER FOR HIS CURIOSITY

To Peter's question: "Lord, and what shall befall this one?" our Lord made answer, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Do thou follow Me." What an important lesson for us! In community life it is not an uncommon temptation to be concerned about the affairs of others. Even among the devout there are such as busy themselves less with their own affairs and with God, than with the concerns of others, to their own spiritual detriment. Such curiosity is very culpable. It deprives us of interior recollection, of peace of heart, violates Christian charity, and not seldom engenders discord. Let us, therefore, earnestly resolve not to concern ourselves in things for which we shall not be held accountable.

Let us follow Jesus, and in all simplicity and humility of heart serve the Lord our God. If we are solicitous for our sanctification, we shall find, in our own heart, so much to correct and to set aright, that little time will remain for observing and criticizing the actions of others. Neither should we be too solicitous for our own future, but, casting all our cares upon the Lord, we should trust implicitly in His loving Providence.

Let us conscientiously use the present moments and hold ourselves in readiness faithfully to follow the voice of the Lord, Who will call us when and whither it shall please Him. How many a fault should I have avoided,

how much grief spared myself, had I taken Christ's words: "What is that to Thee?" for my guiding principle in all my relations with my neighbor, and had regulated my conduct toward my fellow religious and those committed to my care, solely by charity!

Affections: O my Jesus, to what sanctity should I have attained had I heeded Thy admirable lessons! But, alas, instead of thinking solely of following Thee and imitating Thy example, I riveted my attention on vain, earthly things and lost countless graces by a distracted, dissipated life. O my Saviour, I realize my folly; I repent of it, and promise amendment. Constantly recollected in spirit, I will fix my attention on Thee, my sublime Ideal, will draw strength and courage from union with Thee, to carry my cross lovingly after Thee. O Jesus, assist my weakness by Thy almighty grace.

Resolution: I will be solicitous to perform that which is entrusted to me whole-heartedly, without concerning myself in the affairs of others.

Spiritual Bouquet: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Do thou follow Me."

Prayer: Jesus, my Lord, my King . . .

MEDITATION FOR WEDNESDAY

JESUS APPEARS TO HIS DISCIPLES ON A MOUNTAIN IN GALILEE

"And the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And seeing Him they adored; but some doubted" (Matt. 28, 16-17).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus on the mountain in Galilee, in the midst of His Apostles and the other disciples who had come to see their beloved Master.

Second Prelude: Grant me the grace, O my Saviour, to serve Thee with humility and love, that I may be made worthy of Thy divine promises.

First Point

THE LORD IS FAITHFUL TO HIS PROMISES

At the Last Supper, Jesus had foretold His disciples that He would appear to them in Galilee. The angels at the sepulchre had reminded the disciples of Christ's promise, by the message they entrusted to the holy women. How faithfully Jesus abides by His word, as regards time and place,—another proof of His absolute fidelity to His promises! Heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than that Jesus shall fail to verify His word. How consoling for us, who, trusting in His glorious promises, have left all to follow Him! How often has not the remembrance of these promises renewed our courage! We will, therefore, be ever mindful in future that we are serving a faithful Lord. When the labors ordinarily connected with our religious duties become irksome or oppressive, we will revive our spirits by recalling Christ's promise that not the slightest good deed, not even a cup of cold water given in charity, shall go unrewarded. If the recollection of our sins would make us fear and tremble at the thought of the pending judgment, let us call to mind the words of Christ: "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5, 7), and "They that instruct many unto justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity" (Daniel 12, 3). In truth, the Lord is faithful to His promises. We will, therefore, serve Him with in-

violable fidelity. But, alas, how few serve the Lord faithfully! Not infrequently the holiest promises made in moments of fervor are forgotten, and the best resolutions, violated. If even among men it is considered a disgrace to break one's word, how much greater must be the insult offered to God by our frequent infidelities!

Have I not just cause to lament my repeated acts of unfaithfulness, and to implore God's pardon? Which evil inclination is the chief cause of my failure to carry out my good resolutions?

Second Point

THE ZEAL OF THE DISCIPLES TO SEE THE LORD

St. Paul relates: "Then was He seen by more than five hundred brethren at once" (1 Cor. 15, 6). Jesus excludes none from His love. He appeared not only to the Apostles but willed by His presence to rejoice the hearts of all who had come thither. In imitation of our Divine Saviour, we should be charitable and kind toward all with whom we come in contact, for Christian charity must embrace the whole world. The hearts of religious, especially, be they dispensers of the corporal works of mercy or instructors of youth, must beat warmly for those in corporal or spiritual distress. They must serve all with equal fervor, cheerfully fulfilling every commission imposed by obedience. Should they entertain any preference, it must be for those whom Jesus also preferred, namely, the poor, the suffering, those in need of spiritual aid and instruction. Furthermore, let us ponder the holy zeal of the Apostles in urging the other disciples to hasten to Galilee, there to have the happiness of beholding the risen Saviour.

Am I eager to share with others the favors and bless-

ings imparted to me by Almighty God? The Lord has dealt out such diverse talents for a wise purpose. Religious life derives its peculiar charm and merit from the circumstance of mutual participation in the prayers and good works of the members. Should it not be our earnest endeavor to lend assistance and support to one another in the striving for perfection? We should not come to our beloved Saviour alone, but in union with our fellow religious and those confided to our care, whose interests and needs we must commend to Him as fervently as if they were our own. Oh, how gladly will the Lord hear such a prayer! Do I love all with the same tender, affectionate and self-immolating love?

Affections: O my Jesus, how ardently did the disciples await the realization of Thy promises! How great was their joy in Thy presence, how profound their reverence, how ardent their gratitude! But, still I have no cause for envying their happiness. Thou dwellest continually in our midst, and we dare approach Thee, to receive Thy blessing, to beg Thee for graces as often as we choose. Oh, that I would utilize such an incomparable privilege to my advantage! O my Saviour, infuse into my heart the sentiments with which Thou didst replenish the hearts of Thy disciples. Give me a loving solicitude to please Thee in all things, constant fervor in the works of my vocation, a tender, benign and generous love for all my associates. Let us all be united by the bond of mutual charity, in union with Thee.

Resolution: For the love of God, I will generously devote my talents and abilities to the service of others.

Spiritual Bouquet: "The Lord is faithful, Who hath chosen you."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR THURSDAY

THE VARIOUS APPARITIONS OF JESUS AFTER HIS RESURRECTION

"To whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion, by many proofs, for forty days appearing to them and speaking of the kingdom of God" (Acts 1, 3).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus in the midst of His Apostles assisting them in their various needs.

Second Prelude: O my Jesus, teach me how to prepare my heart that I may frequently experience Thy bountiful visitations.

First Point

REPEATED APPARITIONS OF OUR DIVINE LORD

Jesus remained on earth for forty days after His resurrection. What a time of grace for the Apostles, to whom He often appeared, partly to console and instruct them, partly to help them in their perplexities, to encourage and fortify them by marks of divine affection and favor! Thus Jesus willed to confirm their faith in His resurrection, and render their separation from Him more bearable. Likewise, our Blessed Lord manifests Himself to devout souls by His grace and divine consolations. This is especially the case in Holy Communion, when He reveals Himself unmistakably as the living Bread that came down from heaven, to nourish our souls! With a sweet violence Jesus attracts devout souls who think only of Him, rejoice in Him alone, and love Him ardently. To merit such a grace, we must pray for it, guard our senses and strive to be always recollected

We must beg our dear Saviour to prepare our soul for His divine visitations, which ordinarily yield abundant and wholesome fruits. As the Apostles were inflamed with renewed fervor and zeal, strengthened in faith and confidence by the presence of their Divine Master, so we, too, will feel the effects of the Divine Presence, impelling us powerfully to the most heroic sacrifices in promoting the salvation of souls and our own sanctification. Do I not frequently hinder the operations of divine grace by my repeated faults and especially by negligence in the custody of the senses?

Second Point

JESUS OFTEN APPEARED TO HIS DISCIPLES UNEXPECTEDLY

Jesus appeared to the disciples casting their nets on Lake Genesareth; to Mary Magdalen, weeping at the grave; to the pious women, returning to Jerusalem; but, in nearly every instance, He disappeared at the very moment when they began to taste the sweet delights of His visible presence. Likewise our Lord chooses to do even now. He sometimes visits, with His graces, souls consecrated to Him, when they least expect it, and remains at a distance when they impatiently desire His presence. At times we experience the presence of God very vividly in hours of prayer and solitude; then, again, while performing the most unseemly tasks of our vocation. Almighty God would impress upon us that neither rank nor position, nor office, nor yet occupations hinder communion with Him. We may hasten the moment of His visitations by great purity of heart and an ardent desire for His grace. Let us not be too eager, however, to enjoy the consolations of Jesus Christ. We cannot attain to per-

fect rest and satiety in this world. "Seek true peace not on earth, but in heaven," we read in the Imitation. True, even now we should love to possess the liberty and bliss of the children of God, but the hour has not yet come. There is still the time of combat, of labor, and of trials. Let us be content if Jesus visits us only at intervals and for a brief moment, as He did His disciples. But let us be on our guard not to close the doors on our Bridegroom by voluntary unfaithfulness. He might knock while we are buried in distractions and we would fail to hear His gentle pleading for admittance.

Do I hold myself in readiness, by a lively faith, humble confidence, and tender love, to be vouchsafed the bountiful visitations of our Blessed Lord?

Affections: O my Jesus, how amiable art Thou toward all who are truly devoted to Thee! Thou visitest them with Thy grace, Thy consolations, Thy light, and Thy strength, as best pleaseth Thee and according to their needs! How often have I, too, experienced the delights of Thy blissful presence! But oftener through my own fault I have kept Thee, the Bridegroom of my soul, aloof from me; I have hindered Thy bountiful visitations by dissipation and manifold infidelities in Thy service. O Lord, grant that it shall be so no longer. Help me to cleanse my heart of all stains, and tear it away from every affection for creatures, that Thou mayest always find it receptive for Thy grace, and prepared for Thy merciful visitations.

Resolution: I will carefully guard my heart, in order to avoid the slightest act of unfaithfulness.

Spiritual Bouquet: "I seek a pure heart; there will I dwell."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR FRIDAY

JESUS POSSESSES SUPREME POWER IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH

"And Jesus coming, spoke to them, saying: 'All power is given to Me in heaven, and on earth' " (Matt. 28, 18).

First Prelude: Behold our Blessed Saviour surrounded by His Apostles to whom He addresses the above mentioned words.

Second Prelude: O my Saviour, Who wouldst have me submit my understanding and heart perfectly to Thy benign power, grant me the grace to overcome all that would hinder Thy reign in my heart.

First Point

CHRIST'S SUPREME POWER IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH

Not only as God, but also as Man, Christ holds supreme power in heaven and on earth. He merited it in His Humanity by His passion and death, as the Apostle expresses it: "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth" (Ph. 2, 8-10). Accordingly, Jesus possesses absolute power over all the choirs of angels, of whose services He can avail Himself for the spread and propagation of the kingdom of God on earth.

He has unlimited power on earth, to establish His Church, to subject all nations to His sway, to convert sinners, and to sanctify souls. In His hands rests power over life and death, a power which nothing can resist. Without His permission neither the powers of earth nor those of hell can harm His faithful ones. But by no means does our amiable Lord coerce souls. He wills to rule them solely by the submission of their free will to His. Let us, therefore, surrender our hearts absolutely to our Supreme Master, Who alone can make them perfectly happy. O adorable power, sweetest violence! How well are we provided for in the hands of our Blessed Lord, Who ordains all things for our salvation!

Do I serve Jesus with a cheerful heart, and do I submit to Him without reserve? Am I grateful to Him for having gently drawn me away from the world into His holy service?

Second Point

OUR SHARE IN THE POWER OF CHRIST THROUGH CO-OPERATION WITH GRACE

As our Divine Saviour in His Sacred Humanity merited supreme power in heaven and on earth by His passion and death, so may we hope to vanquish the world, the flesh, and Satan, by the mortification of our perverse nature, by the patient endurance of suffering and afflictions. We must exercise a holy violence over ourselves in order to conquer our passions and evil tendencies. Well for those who by patient and persistent struggle have achieved a victory over their passions which leaves them in the possession of unimpaired peace and happiness under the divine guidance of the Holy Spirit and His most adorable Will.

By such mastery of self, souls possess imperturbable

peace through the joy of a good conscience, and exercise great power over the Heart of God, to Whom they are very dear, and Who rejoices in the struggles as well as in the triumphs of His faithful children. God cannot resist their prayers and entreaties, and hence, they draw His graces down upon themselves and others, in fullest measure. By virtue of self-denial and good example they readily gain access to the heart of their neighbor, according to the maxim, "Example is more powerful than precept." In this manner they spread the kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth, and labor efficaciously for the propagation of His divine power and omnipotence. For this purpose we have been called to the religious state. We must, however, bear in mind that God will bless our labors only in so far as we exert violence and advance in perfection. Only then shall we be allowed to participate in Christ's benign reign, and, in virtue of our generosity and unbounded trust, to exercise power even over the Heart of Christ.

Affections: O my Jesus, I rejoice in the power and glory Thou didst achieve through Thy bitter passion and death. I adore Thee, almighty King of heaven and earth, and thank Thee for subjecting my heart to Thee by the sweet power of Thy mercy. Rule my heart, O Jesus, as its sole Master, possess it as Thy conquest. I will belong to Thee alone, and consecrate myself anew to Thy service. May Thy perfect love destroy in me all self love, the power of Thy grace conquer my evil propensities and effect in me a complete transformation that, glorifying Thee, I may be truly happy.

Resolution: I will subject my heart and will to the benign reign of Christ's sweet Will.

Spiritual Bouquet: "I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR SATURDAY

CHRIST'S PROMISE TO BE WITH HIS CHURCH TO THE END OF TIME

"And behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. 28, 20).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus giving His Apostles the comforting assurance that He will never leave them.

Second Prelude: Grant me, O Jesus, a lively faith, that I may be ever mindful of Thy holy presence.

First Point

WHO IS HE THAT PROMISES TO REMAIN WITH US?

Our Blessed Lord had entrusted great things to His Apostles. He had commissioned them to go and teach all nations, and through baptism to receive them into the true fold. He had already promised them the gift of miracles, but added the consoling promise to remain with them until the end of time. O my soul, ponder the greatness or such a promise! Jesus did not promise to send an angel,—no, He, the Almighty, the infinite God Himself will remain with His Church, whose members we also are. Our victorious Saviour, Who has vanquished Satan, the world and death, will take us under His protection. Should not this thought be our comfort in hours of desolation, of tribulation, and of temptation? Though we are exposed to great dangers, the Lion of the tribe of

Juda fights for us and protects us. Should not His presence incite us to fulfill courageously and zealously the commission He has entrusted to us? Jesus is with us, observes our every step, knows all our thoughts, words, and actions, weighs the sacrifices that we make in His service, and rejoices in our progress in perfection. What are the love and attention of the tenderest of mothers, when compared with the touching solicitude of our Blessed Saviour for us? Let us frequently renew our faith in the presence of Jesus, and be mindful of His holy gaze resting upon us incessantly, to afford us encouragement in sufferings, fortitude in time of temptations, and protection against evil.

O comforting and strengthening consciousness of the Divine Presence! What an incentive to good! If I were always mindful of the presence of Jesus, many a difficulty would vanish. Should not the frequent remembrance of His presence preserve me from transgressing the Holy Rule!

Second Point

IN WHAT MANNER DOES JESUS REMAIN WITH US?

How highly must we value sanctifying grace, which effects our spiritual regeneration and unites us most intimately with God. Through sanctifying grace, God dwells in our souls, rules them with His power and goodness, and incessantly bestows on us proofs of His infinite love. He overwhelms us with enlightening and strengthening grace, that we may do good and avoid evil. His loving Providence guides us in all the circumstances of our lives, and directs all things to our salvation. Not only is Jesus with us by His grace; He dwells in our midst under the form of bread, in the adorable Sacrament of the Altar.

Christ's consoling promise to remain with us to the end of time had reference pre-eminently to this Mystery of His Love. In it He has become the Companion of our exile, and that none may be deprived of His presence, He dwells on countless altars at one and the same time. From the Tabernacle, as from a refuge of Mercy, He addresses to all the loving invitation; "Come to Me, all ye who labor and are heavily laden and I will refresh you" (Matt. 11, 2). Day and night He is ready to receive us and to bestow grace upon us. He remains in constant adoration before His Father, praying for us and immolating Himself for our salvation and that of the whole world.

Who enjoys the happiness of the continual presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament more abundantly than religious, dwelling, as they do, in His immediate vicinity, for the most part, under the same roof with Him! If obedience calls us from one place to another, there, too, we find Jesus, awaiting us and holding out to us all the graces that we need for the faithful discharge of our duties. What gratitude, what love, what fidelity do we owe our Divine Saviour, for His bountiful presence!

Affections: O my Saviour, Thou didst promise Thy Apostles not to leave them as orphans, but to remain with them all days, until the end of time. How gloriously hast Thou fulfilled Thy promise! It did not suffice for Thy love to remain with us through Thy grace, Thy power and Thy protection, but Thou wouldst take up Thy abode among us in Thy Sacred Humanity. Oh, how can we ever thank Thee adequately, our most generous Saviour and most loving Redeemer, for Thy unspeakable goodness and liberality. As often as it is permitted us, we will hasten to Thy Tabernacle to draw courage and strength

for the works of our vocation, to unburden to Thy loving Heart our needs of body and of soul, to beg Thy divine blessing for us and those committed to our care.

Resolution: I will frequently in the course of the day, vividly recall the presence of Jesus.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

Prayer: Jesus, my Lord, my King . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

MOTIVES FOR CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER

"And in that day you shall not ask Me anything, Amen, amen I say to you: If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you" (John 16, 23).

First Prelude: Behold Jesus exhorting His disciples to persevere in prayer.

Second Prelude: O Jesus, increase my faith and my confidence in prayer, that I may experience the truth of Thy promises.

First Point

CHRIST'S CONSOLING PROMISES CONCERNING PRAYER

During these days, Holy Church exhorts her children to pray by reminding them of Christ's consoling promise: "Amen, amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you." Could Jesus have urged us more effectually than by solemnly assuring us that our prayers will be heard? He, the Son

of God, knew full well the goodness of His heavenly Father toward us poor creatures. We believe this truth, and yet our confidence is so weak. If we do not doubt the promise of a friend, how can it be possible for us to lack confidence in the tenderest of all Fathers! "He hath," says St. Augustine, "set mercy as guard at the portals of His palace, to receive all who come, and to call those who hesitate." "Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name," says our Lord. "Ask and you shall receive, knock and it shall be opened unto you." The angels of God are ever waiting to minister unto us, to receive and support our petitions. God requires of us but one thing, namely, confidence, as is but meet in virtue of His infinite perfections. Without it, our prayers will be ineffectual.

How forcibly did not our Blessed Lord encourage the sick, who implored their cure, to have confidence! Complying with this injunction, let us address ourselves with the utmost confidence to our most benign and loving Father, Whose greatest joy it is to dispense the best gifts to His children. Mindful of the words: "If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you," let us ask during these days of prayer, for preservation and deliverance from all evils of body and soul, and for everything that is necessary and conducive to our happiness for time and for eternity. What a powerful incentive to persevering confidence in this truth!

Second Point

WE SHOULD PRAY IN THE NAME OF JESUS

Our lack of confidence in prayer originates in our utter spiritual destitution. We behold in ourselves naught but sinfulness and weakness. Have we considered that

Jesus includes all in His promises, and in His infinite mercy and love assures all who pray in His name: "If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you." Jesus would say, in other words, that the efficacy of our prayers is determined not only by the divine promise, but still more by His infinite merits, which the heavenly Father Himself regards as our possession. How could we, therefore, fear not being heard? To pray in the name of Jesus, means, further, to approach the heavenly Father, commissioned by Jesus, to ask for that which He has merited for us by His bitter passion and death, namely, such favors as will secure our eternal salvation. We must pray for that virtue which is most necessary for us; for forgiveness of our sins, for strength in temptation, for the grace to render our activity fruitful for the salvation of souls; for the grace of perseverance, for heaven, for God Himself and His everlasting possession. These spiritual goods alone can make us truly happy, and, according to the words of our Blessed Saviour, our joy, perfect. Let us strive, in accordance with the admonition of the Apostle, above all for the gift of prayer; for all good things will come to us through prayer.

Do I always pray in the name of Jesus? Am I deserving of the reproach that I have never asked for anything with real fervor in His name?

Affections: O most loving Jesus, I thank Thee with my whole heart for having promised us, in Thy infinite love, that the Father will give us whatever we ask in Thy name! What infinite love! What divine generosity! My God, my most loving Father, so ardently desires my salvation that He obliges Himself to give me in answer to my petitions whatever may be conducive thereto.

Knowing this, could I ever suffer doubt and mistrust to arise in my heart? O my God, I believe firmly all Thou hast said, and confide with implicit trust in Thy sacred promises. Do Thou, O my Divine Master, Thyself teach me to pray in Thy name in union with Thee, that thus my prayers may be acceptable to Thy heavenly Father, and fruitful for my salvation.

Resolution: To reanimate my confidence in prayer, I will often recall the loving promise of our Divine Lord.

Spiritual Bouquet: "If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you."

Prayer: Our Father . . .

MEDITATION FOR MONDAY

OF PRAYER

"And I say to you, Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you" (Luke 11, 9).

First Prelude: In spirit place yourself among the disciples, and listen reverently to our Blessed Saviour's consoling promise.

Second Prelude: Grant me grace, O my Jesus, always to appear before Thee with humility and reverence, and to pray with fervor and perseverance.

First Point

JESUS WILLS US TO PERSEVERE IN FERVENT PRAYER

How fittingly Holy Church chooses for these days the gospel narrative of a friend who, coming to his friend at night, by his incessant entreaties, at last obtained relief.

What an admirable picture of the power of prayer, which even triumphs over the Will of God! Men often become irritated on being urged, but God, on the contrary, is pleased with our perseverance. It would seem that we never cause Him more joy than when we use a holy violence, as did the patriarch of old: "And he said to him: 'Let me go, for it is break of day.'" "He answered: 'I will not let thee go except thou bless me'" (Mose 32, 26). Our loving Mother, Holy Church, teaches us to persevere in prayer by directing us to repeat the same petitions frequently as we do in the litanies. How repeatedly do we say: "We beseech Thee, hear us!" We will endeavor, in union with all fervent Christians, to make these days truly days of pious prayer, since, as religious, we are under an especial obligation to draw down upon the earth the blessings of heaven by our fervent supplications. The pauper does not tire of begging for alms. Mindful of our misery and helplessness, we must likewise entreat God with all the ardor of our soul. Let us beg the Holy Ghost for the fire of love, for an intense desire, that it may bear our heart, as it were, on wings, heavenward.

What reproaches do I deserve for my lack of fervor and perseverance in prayer?

Second Point

WE SHOULD PRAY WITH REVERENCE AND HUMILITY

Is it not written in Holy Scripture (Ecclus. 35, 21) that the prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds? If we appear before God penetrated with our utter misery, and represent to Him our pitiful condition; if we say to Him as a pauper to a rich man: Lord, behold my indigence; I hunger and thirst for Thy graces,

I am despoiled of virtue and all that is good, God will not turn a deaf ear, but in His loving mercy will come to our assistance. Does He not manifest an especial tenderness for the poor, who, realizing their dependence and helplessness, cry to Him from the depths of their heart? Do we, furthermore, consider to whom we address ourselves when we pray? We speak to God, Whose powerful voice makes the pillars of heaven tremble, before Whom even the seraphim in reverence veil their faces. Must not we poor mortals be penetrated with profoundest respect for Him Whom all the heavens humbly adore? At the same time, are we not imploring an offended God, Whom we have greatly dishonored by sin? Would we obtain pardon for our sins, then like the publican, who was justified because of his great humility, we must humble ourselves. The saints, though they enjoyed God's especial favor, profoundly abased themselves. "Dare I speak to my Lord whereas I am dust and ashes?" said the holy patriarch Abraham (Moses 18, 27). "Who art Thou, O Lord, and who am I that I dare appear before Thee?" cried St. Francis of Assisi. And we, poor sinners, often act as though God Almighty were indebted to us. Let us then present our petitions to Him with profound humility and respect that we may be heard. Do I pray with outward reverence and inward fervor? Are my sentiments those of the truly humble and lowly of heart? This disposition is the surest pledge of God's special favor.

Affections: O Divine Saviour, Who in infinite love didst pass days and nights in prayer to Thy heavenly Father for me and for all mankind, grant me the spirit of prayer. Thou knowest how much I stand in need of it, and that of myself I can never attain it. I realize, my

dearest Lord, that I have frequently been guilty of tepidity, of distractions, of irreverence in prayer, that I frequently yield to mistrust and repugnance, which rob my prayers of all fruit. O my Saviour, be Thou moved at sight of my misery, have compassion with my weakness. In Thy infinite mercy, imbue me with a great desire for Thy divine assistance, and an humble and enduring confidence in Thy infinite goodness. Excite in all hearts a holy fervor that our united prayers may draw down abundant graces upon ourselves and the whole Church, during this holy season.

Resolution: I will pray with great interior fervor and outward respect.

Spiritual Bouquet: "The prayer of the just man shall pierce the clouds."

Prayer: Our Father . . .

MEDITATION FOR TUESDAY

JESUS APPEARS TO HIS APOSTLES FOR THE LAST TIME BEFORE HIS ASCENSION

"They therefore who were come together asked Him, saying: 'Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' But He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or moments, which the Father hath put in His own power' " (Acts. 1, 6-7).

First Prelude: Picture Christ's last apparition before His ascension, and listen respectfully to His loving counsels.

Second Prelude: Give me the grace, O Jesus, to renounce all unnecessary solicitude and to direct my desires toward thee.

First Point

THE QUESTION OF THE APOSTLES

Jesus had assembled the Apostles for the last time, once more to console and counsel them before going to His Father. He promised them the Holy Ghost and the gift of miracles for the worthy discharge of their sublime mission. But despite the many miracles they had already witnessed, and the countless favors the risen Saviour had so lavishly expended on them, they were still earthly-minded, thinking only of temporal power and of distinction, and longing to share in it. Accordingly, they asked Jesus: "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?" Undoubtedly, such a question, savoring as it did of worldly sentiments, must have grieved our Divine Saviour. Had He not unceasingly imparted to His disciples the most excellent lessons, and instructed them particularly by His holy example? Had He not recently sent them out to conquer souls, whom they should disengage from earthly attachments, by instilling into their hearts love of poverty, of renunciation, of meekness, and of humility, at the cost of untold sacrifices and hardships? These souls they should unite into a spiritual empire but, alas, how little had they understood Him! The Holy Ghost had first to transform them completely, and render them truly spiritual, worthy followers of their Divine Master.

We have received the same Holy Spirit; no low or mean sentiment should, therefore, be tolerated! Only the one care should claim our attention, more and more to establish and confirm the kingdom of God in our hearts. But how rarely are perfect renunciation and detachment from all earthly things, and the corresponding earnest

striving for heavenly goods, even at a dear cost, found even among religious! Many lead a wholly natural life, yield to sensitiveness under reprimands, covet praise and esteem, love and seek personal comfort and convenience, in short, whatever flatters self-love. The Holy Ghost cannot penetrate such hearts, because their many voluntary faults and habitual distractions constitute a formidable barrier to divine grace. Thus their hearts, created for God alone, slavishly cling to earth.

Have I not made similar experiences in my life? Shall it not be my earnest endeavor to make my heart receptive for the graces of the Holy Ghost, by fervent prayer and mortification?

Second Point

THE ANSWER OF JESUS

In answer to their question, our Blessed Lord said to the Apostles: "It is not for you to know either the time or the hour that the Father hath ordained in His power." Jesus does not will His disciples to concern themselves with future events, but rather, to devote all their energy and zeal to their present duties. The Most High has reserved to Himself the disposition of our affairs, in every detail. We must submit to His Providence, fulfill His holy Will and seek to utilize for our salvation whatever by divine dispensation may befall us. Do we not often succumb to the temptation of occupying ourselves unnecessarily with the past or even with the future, at the same time forgetting the all-important duties of the present, which demand our utmost attention? This temptation is a dangerous rock which has caused the shipwreck of many a pious soul, a carefully concealed snare, which our enemy, in his cunning, spreads for us. What harm has

he accordingly done! Splendid opportunities to practice virtue and to acquire merit for heaven are lost sight of to give place to idle worries concerning the past, and to futile wishes for the future. How happy they who have acquired the facility of utilizing the present moment and faithfully discharging every duty! God's abundant grace shall not be lacking them.

Have I not also sacrificed peace of soul to useless worries concerning the past or the future? Oh, that I would at last be convinced that the faithful discharge of my present duties is the surest pledge of divine assistance for the future.

Affections: O Eternal Light, send a ray from the heights of heaven to penetrate the innermost recesses of my heart! Give me strength and grace to throw off all unnecessary anxiety and cares, and let me not tend toward sensual, earthly things. How great, how faithful art Thou in Thy promises! O my Jesus, replenish my mind with the sublime truths of faith, penetrate my heart with love of virtue, which Thou so much desirest to see in me, that I may continually walk in Thy presence, and generously renounce whatever is opposed to the efficacy of divine grace in my soul. Impart to me the zeal and fortitude which the Holy Ghost infused into the hearts of the Apostles, by which He effected their complete transformation, that instructed through Him, and replenished with His graces, I may be Thy true disciple.

Resolution: I will banish all unnecessary cares and solicitude, and think only of discharging faithfully and conscientiously the duties of the present day.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Cast all your cares upon the Lord."

Prayer: Jesus, my Lord, my King . . .

MEDITATION FOR WEDNESDAY

JESUS LEADS HIS DISCIPLES OUT TOWARDS THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

"And He led them out as far as Bethania; and lifting up His hands, he blessed them" (Luke 24, 50).

First Prelude: Picture the disciples on their way to the Mount of Olives, Jesus in their midst. Kneel with the friends of our Divine Lord to receive His parting benediction.

Second Prelude: O my Lord and Saviour, from Thy Tabernacle frequently impart Thy divine blessing to me that I may become truly humble, obedient, and mortified.

First Point

JESUS LED HIS DISCIPLES OUT AS FAR AS BETHANY

Not without reason does the evangelist tell us that Jesus led His disciples by way of Bethania out toward Olivet, whence He ascended into heaven. Bethania means "house of obedience" and it seems that Jesus willed to intimate that we must walk the path of obedience if we would be sure of reaching heaven. For the same reason many choose the religious state, which teaches us to follow closely in the footsteps of our Divine Lord. In fact, is there anything more excellent either in heaven or on earth than to make the once recognized Will of God our rule of action? Nothing is more sanctifying than such obedience. It guides the blind, confirms the wavering, and subjugates the haughty, will. It comprises all the virtues: humility, self-denial, patience, faith, hope, and charity. Obedience causes all uneasiness concerning the past to vanish, for He in Whose name we obey could not

have deceived us, and what was done in obedience was done well.

How happy are obedient souls in their present duty? Are they not doing the holy Will of God, than which nothing more consoling can be imagined? As regards the future, they are likewise without concern, for in the accomplishment of the Divine Will they will always enjoy security and peace. O happy life, O blessed death, following upon such a life! Should we not rejoice and thank God that we, too, may dwell in Bethania, the house of obedience? At the same time we must strive to render ourselves worthy of such a privilege by the exercise of a simple, humble obedience. Should submission ever seem an unbearable yoke, let us consider that even though nature shrinks from a life of obedience, it will be sweet to die as an obedient religious.

Is my obedience so perfect that I may hope to find in it the straight and direct road to heaven?

Second Point

JESUS WILLED TO ASCEND TO HEAVEN FROM THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

Olivet possessed a sacred charm for our Divine Saviour. It had been for Him the scene of deepest degradation, of intense agony, and of the most painful sufferings. There he had prayed so often, fought so many spiritual combats for our salvation; now, however, Olivet should become for Him the scene of supreme glory, of the most perfect bliss, and of the sweetest consolation. How must Peter, James, and John, witnesses of His agony in the Garden, have marvelled at the transformation! Picture this scene very vividly, reverently contemplating your Divine Saviour standing on the mountain

brow. Inexpressible mildness and serenity, combined with divine majesty and dignity, grace His whole appearance. All eyes are reverently fixed upon Him. Once more His loved ones are permitted to behold His Sacred Wounds, those blessed signs of our redemption. Lifting up His adorable hands, He imparts to all His last blessing. What a plenitude of graces and heavenly gifts was imparted to them with this blessing!

How happy should we consider ourselves to have been blessed by Jesus in that solemn moment! But how often does not the same Divine Saviour in the adorable Sacrament of the Altar impart His efficacious blessing. As the Apostles received strength and encouragement for their apostolic labors in this divine blessing, so we, too, shall experience the life-giving effects of God's benediction in the works of our sublime calling. Let us never lose sight of the fact that we, too, like Jesus, must enter into everlasting bliss by the way of struggles, of sacrifices, and of sufferings. Let us therefore rejoice in the contempt, in the degradation, in the sufferings and tribulations that fall to our lot in this life. The greater they are, the greater will be our everlasting reward.

Do I frequently ponder the words of Holy Scripture (Acts 14-21) that we must enter the kingdom of God through many tribulations?

Affections: O my beloved Jesus, let me bear in mind that the eternal glory of Thy Sacred Humanity is the reward of Thy obedience unto the death of the cross. I will follow in Thy footsteps, O Jesus, in the path of poverty, of humility, of obedience, of mortification and love of the cross, that I may be with Thee in the eternal mansions, where Thou hast prepared a place for each of Thy faithful disciples. Animated with sentiments of love and

devotion, we accompany Thee, O Jesus, to the holy mountain where Thou dost bless Thy holy Mother and Thy beloved disciples for the last time before ascending to Thy Father. In spirit kneeling at Thy feet, we pray Thee for Thy blessing that it may tear all earthly ties asunder and fill us with a loathing of the false, fleeting, worldly pleasures. May it be for us the pledge of that eternal benediction which Thou wilt bestow on Thy elect on the Last Day.

Resolution: I will often beg my Saviour for His divine blessing, that it may guide and strengthen me for the faithful discharge of the duties enjoined upon me by obedience.

Spiritual Bouquet: "And lifting up His hands, He blessed them."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR ASCENSION DAY

"And when He had said these things, while they looked on, He was raised up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they were beholding Him going up to heaven, behold two men stood by them in white garments, who also said: 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus Who is taken from you into heaven shall so come, as you have seen Him going into heaven'" (Acts 1, 9-11).

First Prelude: In spirit join the Apostles and disciples and the Blessed Virgin on Mount Olivet to contemplate the King of Glory about to enter His kingdom.

Second Prelude: O my beloved Saviour, grant me grace to follow Thee in spirit by my intense desire and the most ardent love.

First Point

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF JESUS INTO HIS HEAVENLY KINGDOM

Resplendent with celestial light, the Saviour ascends to heaven, as King of eternal glory, to take possession of His kingdom. What a consoling and joyous aspect was if not for the Apostles, for His Blessed Mother and all the friends of Jesus! How great must have been their desire to accompany their Divine Master on His triumphal ascent! Happier than they were the countless hosts of the Old Law, who being now released from their weary captivity, were permitted with Him to enter the heavenly Jerusalem, to dwell with Him in the Eternal Mansions. Hosts of angels are flocking earthward, eager to hail their King, Who now returns to take possession of His Kingdom. Watch the grand procession, as it moves onward to the eternal gates. Join in the sounds of praise and congratulations on every side, and rejoice in the brilliant triumph of our Lord and Saviour, Who has redeemed us with His Precious Blood, and opened for us, too, the portals of heaven. In truth, Jesus could now present to the heavenly father, as trophies of His victory, the countless souls that He had snatched from the clutches of Satan. "I have glorified Thee on earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now glorify Thou Me, O Father, with Thyself, with the glory which I had, before the world was, with Thee. I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou hast given Me out of the world. Thine they were, and to Me Thou gavest them; and they have kept Thy word" (John 17, 4-6).

Let us behold our Blessed Saviour enthroned at the

right hand of the Father, while the hosts of blessed spirits tender Him due homage and adoration. Now He can reward His elect according to their merits, with the places forfeited by Lucifer and his proud adherents. Prostrate in adoration at the feet of the Divine Conqueror, let us offer Him our felicitations and beg Him to disengage our hearts from all earthly affections to draw us after Him, that, in the words of Holy Church, we may even now "spiritually dwell in heavenly places."

How easy and bearable should all hardships and sufferings appear if I would more frequently raise my mind and heart to heaven to say with the Apostle: "But our conversation is in heaven" (Phil. 3, 20).

Second Point

THE APOSTLES AND DISCIPLES OF THE LORD

The disciples lovingly gazed after their Divine Master till a light cloud enveloped Him, the joy of their hearts, and the source of all consolation. Long after the cloud had disappeared, and all trace of Him had gone, they remained motionless, still gazing after Him. Suddenly two men in white garments stood by them and said: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking up to heaven?" It was as if they would remind the Apostles not to remain in contemplation, but to go forth to prepare themselves for the work entrusted to them. Apostles should announce the glad tidings of the gospel to the whole world. It will not suffice merely to raise our eyes heavenward with intense desire, but we must labor and struggle, for the "Kingdom of heaven suffers violence and only the violent shall bear it away" (Matt. 1, 11-12).

We, too, must profit by this sound advice. We must

turn away our eyes from the vanities of the world, and look up to heaven, our eternal home. This alone, however, will not suffice. We must keep on the narrow path of the evangelical counsels, advancing from virtue to virtue, by removing all the obstacles that place themselves between God and our soul and obscure the light of grace. Our evil inclinations are, as it were, clouds that hinder us from perceiving the divine presence. How often has not a cloudlet of vanity, of sensitiveness, of dissipation and idleness withdrawn our Divine Master from view, thus frustrating the work of His grace! If we consider the happiness to which we have been called, should we not despise the deceitful pleasures which self-love, vanity, sensual gratification, and the use of temporal goods afford? Let us cry out with St. Ignatius: "Oh, how contemptible does earth appear when I contemplate heaven!"

Am I convinced that I must become a saint, if I wish to join my Saviour in heaven, and that I can become a saint only through mortification and self-denial?

Affections: O my Jesus, all power and glory is Thine own! Thou hast achieved it by suffering, happily now over. Thou hast today entered into eternal glory, opened heaven for us, and prepared a place for me in Thy Kingdom. Should such a hope not be mighty enough to elevate my thoughts and desires to Thee incessantly? Draw me after Thee, O my Beloved, disengage me from earthly ties, which rivet me to creatures, and impress deeply on my heart a burning desire for heaven. But, O my King, before beholding Thee in Thy glory, I must merit this happiness by love, by sufferings, and by self-restraint. Give me the grace to follow Thee, that for me, too, the day will dawn when I shall be made worthy to join in the canticle of all the heavenly hosts: "Sing ye to God, ye

kingdoms of the earth; sing ye to the Lord: sing ye to God Who mounteth above the heaven of heavens to the east. Alleluia!" (Ps. 67).

Resolution: We will renounce every worldly inclination, and constantly direct our thoughts and desires heavenwards.

Spiritual Bouquet: "I am going to prepare a place for you."

Prayer of the Church: O powerful Lord, Who hast this day ascended victoriously above all heaven leave us not as poor orphans, but send us from the Father the Spirit of Truth, Whom Thou hast promised, Alleluia! Our Father . . .

MEDITATION FOR FRIDAY

THE APOSTLES RETURN TO JERUSALEM

"And they adoring went into Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke 24, 52).

First Prelude: Picture the Apostles after the Ascension of their beloved Master leaving Mount Olivet in obedience to the angels' bidding.

Second Prelude: Replenish my heart, O Jesus, through faith, hope and charity with holy joy, that I may find the practice of virtue easy and agreeable.

First Point

THE JOY OF THE DISCIPLES

Holy Scripture relates of the Apostles: that they "went into Jerusalem with great joy." Fortified in their faith by witnessing the Ascension of their Master, they adored Him seated on the throne of His glory and rejoiced that

now He reigns forever in the kingdom of His Father! They rejoiced, too, in the hope of a reunion with Him in never-ending bliss. Had not they received His blessing, and with it the assurance that their labors should prosper under His assistance? Besides, He had promised to prepare a place for them in heaven. It was this assurance that filled their hearts with jubilation at the mere remembrance of His glory. Let us share the joy of the Apostles, for He Who ascended to heaven is also our Lord and Master. In us, too, the ascension of our Lord should produce similar effects. It should elevate our mind to our Saviour, direct our desires heavenward and unite us most intimately with Jesus, the source of all love and bliss.

The children of the world rejoice in vain, perishable, even harmful goods. Spiritual joy, however, alone can fully satisfy our yearning, emanating as it does from an inexhaustible source, and having for its object eternal goods,—God and our salvation. Such joy is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and a foretaste of heavenly delights. It is the property of all faithful souls, the fruit of justice. Let us, therefore, strive to have a share in so precious a gift, by scrupulously avoiding the least sin and fulfilling our Holy Rule with the utmost fidelity.

What may be the cause why I frequently lack spiritual joy? Do I, perhaps, like the children of the world, seek pleasure in temporal things?

Second Point

THE APOSTLES OBEY THE INJUNCTION OF THE ANGELS

Well may the disciples have prostrated themselves in adoration, and reverently kissed the footprints which their Master in His infinite love had left behind. Gladly would

they have lingered longer on the spot so dear to them, but they recognized in the angels the messengers of their Master, Who manifested His will through them. Accordingly they obeyed promptly and complying with the Master's bidding returned to Jerusalem to await the coming of the Paraclete. Let us follow their example and go cheerfully whither our superiors, our visible guardian angels, bid us go. Should we be compelled to leave a place that afforded us many spiritual consolations, and relinquish practices that seemed very helpful to us, let us be convinced that nothing can be more beneficial for us than to fulfill the holy Will of God, manifested to us through obedience. Having fortified ourselves by earnest prayer and received the blessing of our beloved Master, we will courageously walk in the footprints of our Beloved, which He has left us as a sure guide to our heavenly home. We recognize them exactly in our holy Rule and in the constitutions, which invite us to the imitation of our Blessed Lord. Let us entreat Jesus to fill our hearts with His holy love, that we may generously walk the way of the commandments and the evangelical counsels, and quicken our pace the nearer we approach to our sublime goal.

Do I frequently consider that the acts of love and renunciation, of humility and submission, enjoined upon me by my Holy Rule are so many rungs on the ladder to heaven? Should I find any duty repugnant, if I were truly imbued with the love of Jesus?

Affections: O my Jesus, Thou hast said to Thy Apostles: "If you loved Me, you would indeed be glad, because I go to the Father: for the Father is greater than I" (John 14, 28). Oh, grant me this love, which shall also be the source of my joy. Let me follow Thy foot-

steps, my beloved Bridegroom, by pondering Thy mysteries, taking Thy lessons well to heart, and keeping constantly before me the example of Thy virtues. Let me strive for the happiness of union with Thee by the perfect accomplishment of Thy Divine Will. But I stand in need of the Holy Spirit, Whom Thou, O Jesus, didst promise to the Apostles. I will surrender myself completely to His divine guidance, will place no obstacles to His operations, and beg Him to break the last bonds that still rivet my heart to earth.

Resolution: I will testify my love to Jesus by faithfully and cheerfully complying with every injunction of our Holy Rule.

Spiritual Bouquet: "If you love Me, you would rejoice that I go to the Father."

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR SATURDAY

PREPARATION FOR PENTECOST

"And I send the promise of My Father upon you; but stay you in the city, till you be endued with power from on high" (Luke 25, 49).

First Prelude: In spirit enter the Supper Room and see the disciples in company with the Blessed Mother of God preparing for the coming of the Holy Ghost.

Second Prelude: O Holy Spirit, replenish my heart, with an ardent desire for Thy gifts, and give me grace to use well the time of preparation for Thy coming.

First Point

JESUS COMMANDS THE APOSTLES TO REMAIN IN JERUSALEM

According to the express injunction of their Master, the Apostles were to remain in Jerusalem and there await the coming of the Holy Ghost. If God contemplates especial graces for His own, He usually demands a corresponding preparation. Thus it was with the wonderful rain of Manna, when He said to the people through Moses: "Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow you shall behold the glory of the Lord." The whole world had to be prepared for the advent of the Messiah for thousands of years, that their waiting might increase their faith and intensify their desire. The Apostles were very much in need of an ardent desire for the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and in order to excite it in their hearts they were to prepare for His coming by fervent prayer. They must, indeed, have been convinced of their great need of divine assistance. How hopeless, seemingly, was the prospect before them, as they slowly came down from Olivet! How cowardly had they been during the passion of Christ, and how must fear have overpowered them now after the death of their Master, since they concealed themselves behind bolted doors! And these Apostles, so intimidated, and in many respects wholly ignorant, should go as lambs among wolves to preach the gospel to the whole world. Must not their utter insufficiency have impelled them to cry to heaven for supernatural courage and strength? Surely, they must now have recalled the words of their Master: "Your Father from heaven will give the good Spirit to them that ask Him" (Luke 11, 13).

We, too, are sorely in need of divine grace, for we

lack courage in times of sufferings and temptations, and are so easily repulsed by difficulties met with in the observance of our Holy Rule and in the discharge of our duties. Oh, let us then remain in Jerusalem, that is, in retirement; let us close the doors of our heart, lest our spiritual enemy hinder our preparation for the feast of Pentecost, and full of eager longing let us await the advent of the Holy Ghost.

Am I convinced that graces of Pentecost will be imparted to me in the measure of my generosity in self-surrender and holy recollection?

Second Point

WHAT WE MUST DO TO QUALIFY OURSELVES FOR THE RECEPTION OF THE GRACES OF THE HOLY GHOST

Jesus had promised the Holy Ghost not to the Apostles alone, but to His Church, to every individual member who co-operates with His sacred designs, and submits to His loving inspirations. True, indeed, the Holy Spirit no longer appears visibly as He did on the feast of Pentecost, in the form of fiery tongues, or as at the Jordan, in the form of a dove, but invisibly He daily, even hourly, visits our souls. He comes to convert sinners, to enlighten the just and to urge them with a sweet violence to strive for perfection. The Holy Ghost, in truth, incites souls to extraordinary works of penance and charity. Was it not the Holy Ghost Who taught us to recognize the beauties of religious life, of perpetual virginity? Was it not His grace that drew us irresistibly away from the dangers of the world, into the house of God? At certain times, however, the Church exhorts us to quicken our zeal and reanimate our fervor, that we may draw upon our soul a

fuller measure of graces. This is especially true of the days preceding the feast of Pentecost. We will, therefore, prepare ourselves for the marvels of grace which the Holy Ghost even in our day works in countless souls. We must seek encouragement in the thought that so many children of Mother Church, especially so many religious, unite with us in imploring this best of all gifts. May not our culpable negligence deprive us of the wonderful effects of His bountiful gift.

Which faults must I avoid, which virtues practice that my heart may be worthy to receive the graces of the Holy Ghost?

Affections: O my God, with Thy grace I recognize my utter spiritual misery, as well as my inability to relieve it. Thou alone canst regenerate and transform the barren and unfruitful soil of my heart,—Thou alone canst cause it to yield fruits of perfection. As Thou didst effect such marvels of grace in Thy Apostles only after a careful preparation, so dost Thou demand of me purity of heart, penance, detachment from creatures, before Thou wouldst overwhelm me with Thy bountiful gifts. O Divine Spirit, Who effectest in us both to will and to accomplish good, teach me how to prepare for the blessed days of grace and mercy. Come, Thou Light of hearts, Thou Teacher of the humble, Thou Father of the poor, and manifest Thy love and power in us!

Resolution: I will often implore the Holy Ghost to enlighten me that my preparation for the feast of Pentecost may be most pleasing to Him and most beneficial to me.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Your Father in heaven will give the Good Spirit to those that ask Him for it."

Prayer: Our Father.

MEDITATION FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE TESTIMONY OF THE HOLY GHOST AND OF THE APOSTLES CONCERNING JESUS

"But when the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of Me; and you shall give testimony, because you are with Me from the beginning" (John 15, 26-27).

First Prelude: In spirit enter the Supper Room and reverently hear our Lord conversing with His Apostles.

Second Prelude: Give me grace, O my Jesus, to ponder well the mysterious activity of the Holy Ghost in the faithful soul that I may resolve to place no obstacle to His operations.

First Point

THE HOLY GHOST TESTIFIED OF JESUS CHRIST

The Holy Ghost testified gloriously of Jesus Christ on the feast of Pentecost. He, the Spirit of Truth, announced His coming in visible form to the faithless inhabitants of Jerusalem by a mighty wind. What could the hatred of our Lord's enemies avail against such testimony! To this day, the Holy Ghost has not ceased to testify of Jesus, to animate, to instruct and guide His Spouse, the Church. Through the same Holy Spirit, the Apostles achieved victories; through Him, the gospel is preached; through Him the true children of the Church are formed, who, like the Apostles, unceasingly testify by the sanctity of their lives that the Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Church is the only true and saving

Church. She alone can at all times boast of martyrs and of saints, because she alone is sustained by the Spirit of Truth, of Sanctity, of Power, and of Strength.

Today He comes to us anew Who proceeds from the Father and the Son. Oh, that we could worthily receive Him! He comes to strengthen and to equip us, too, for the combat. Armed with His power, we shall have nothing to fear. Victory will be ours, He will secure it for us as He secured it for the Apostles and countless devoted children of Mother Church. Let us not suffer the knowledge of our misery and weakness to deter us from placing unbounded trust in Him. Te draw down His especial favor upon us, we need but be truly humble and ardently implore His aid. He will then qualify us, too, to testify of Him by all our actions and omissions.

Am I grateful for the inestimable grace of Faith? Do I pray the Holy Ghost daily to assist me in the discharge of the duties of my vocation and in the sanctification of self?

Second Point

OUR TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST

How many fervent children of Holy Church, enlightened and fortified by the Holy Ghost, even in our day render a glorious testimony of Christ! The Church has at all times been the object of the world's hatred and suffered all manner of persecutions and calumnies. This uninterrupted struggle, however, gave her saints, who constitute her glory and renown. Though we are not living in times of bloody persecutions, nevertheless, we have ample opportunity to testify of our Divine Saviour, by the practice of faith, charity, and, in fact, all the virtues.

Who labors either by word or example for the glory of God, participates with the Holy Ghost in the most sublime work that can fall to the lot of man. Countless priests and missionaries, worthy successors of the Apostles, preach the gospel amid untold hardships. By fearless confession of the faith, by conscientious observance of the commandments of God and of the Church, many of the faithful bear the marks of Christ's disciples. Hosts of religious, by exercising works of mercy and all the virtues ordinarily inseparable from these works, proclaim to all the world what power the Holy Ghost wields over our hearts. To all these, the words of the Saviour aptly apply: "You shall be witnesses unto Me—even to the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts 1, 8). Should we not excite in our hearts an intense desire to be actuated in our works of charity by humility, by love of sacrifice and joy of heart, as it becomes true spouses of Christ? Thus we will bear witness to the truth of the words of our Divine Saviour, that His yoke is sweet and His burden light.

Is my fervor lacking in this regard?

Affections: O my Jesus, replenished by the Holy Spirit, the Apostles gave glorious testimony of Thee by their preaching, by their miracles and the shedding of their blood. In Thy infinite mercy, Thou hast called me, too, O my dear Saviour, to give testimony of Thee as Thy true disciple and Thy faithful spouse. I have obligated myself to emulate in my words and actions, the humility, the meekness, and the forbearing love of Thy Divine Heart. But how negligent have I been in the practice of these virtues! I pray Thee, renew my fervor, replenish me with the strength of Thy Holy Spirit, that in me, too, may be made manifest the glorious effects we admire in Thy true disciples.

Resolution: I will endeavor to glorify Jesus and promote the interests of His Divine Heart, by charity, by patience and holy cheerfulness.

Spiritual Bouquet: "You shall be witnesses unto Me even to the uttermost parts of the earth."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR MONDAY

THE APOSTLES PREPARED IN SOLITUDE FOR THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST

"And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where they abode" (Acts 1, 13).

First Prelude: In spirit enter the Cenacle at Jerusalem, and join the disciples and the Blessed Mother of God there assembled in profound solitude.

Second Prelude: O Holy Spirit, let me realize the advantage of interior solitude and retirement, that I may learn to love and to practice it.

First Point

RETIREMENT AND SOLITUDE, ESSENTIALS OF A WORTHY PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST

Interior solitude is an excellent preparation for the reception of the Holy Ghost. We learn this from the Apostles, who, after the Ascension, secluded themselves in the upper chamber of the Supper Hall, to await the coming of the Comforter, Whom the Saviour had promised them. Would we share in the gifts and graces which the

Holy Ghost generously imparted to them, then we must, likewise, seek solitude that God may speak to our hearts (Osee 2, 14). It is true, we are not free to forsake the field of activity assigned to us in obedience, but we can erect an interior solitude in our heart by means of recollection, by occupying ourselves solely with God and our duty to the exclusion of all foreign thoughts and desires. The Holy Ghost communicates with souls only in so far as they avoid distractions and seek retirement. He would in vain impart His graces to dissipated, distracted souls for they would very soon forfeit them. Distractions make us forgetful of the best resolves, destroy the holiest sentiments, choke the precious seed of pious inspirations, and destroy the last vestige of the love of God! The Holy Ghost is a God of peace, a jealous God, Who rejects a divided heart. Let us, then, foster interior recollection, by faithful silence, which sanctifies the soul; let us curb our tongue by repressing every superfluous word during this novena; let us silence our imagination, keep guard at the door of our hearts in order to repel every strange thought that would intrude. Let us take well to heart the beautiful words of the Imitation: "Empty your heart of all creatures, that it may be filled with God."

Do I solicitously banish every idle thought and do I strive to foster interior solitude by the mortification of my senses?

Second Point

ADVANTAGES OF INTERIOR SOLITUDE

Consummate perfection consists in detaching ourselves from creatures that we may be more intimately united with God. But only those who in the solitude of their heart reflect on the instability of earthly things will real-

ize that all is vanity except loving and serving God. Only they will realize that the whole world and all its concerns are not deserving of the least affection. Therefore, they disengage their hearts from all things earthly, and direct all their love toward God, the One alone worthy of love, alone perfect. They desire naught but His presence, no other will save His divine pleasure. Oh, how rapidly do such souls progress in virtue! They find nothing difficult, assisted as they are by the hand of a powerful, omnipotent God; nothing seems bitter under the protection of the God of all consolation. These souls renounce the worldly joys in exchange for the plenitude of peace for time and for eternity. O blessed solitude, paradise on earth, way to heaven! From the moment we begin to live in thee, we possess ourselves, find pleasure in sweet converse with God, in constant fervor of spirit, in the reception of a super-abundance of graces. May we always resolutely follow the inner movements of the Holy Ghost, and refuse Him none of the sacrifices He asks of us! Furthermore, in solitude, in loving intercourse with God, we learn how to live a life of faith, which life, being an uninterrupted practice of all genuine virtues, leads quickly and infallibly to perfection.

Let us thank God that in religion He has offered us so many holy means to preserve interior solitude and to enjoy its precious fruits. Does the Holy Ghost find me properly disposed, that is, am I sufficiently recollected and retired for the reception of divine grace?

Affections: O Holy Spirit, Thou hast said, by the prophet: "I will take them into solitude and speak to their hearts." Yes, I will seek the repose and solitude which is so agreeable to Thee, that I may hear Thee uttering words of eternal life. Do Thou, O sweet Guest of

souls, close my interior and exterior senses; rule over my imagination; control my eyes, my tongue, and all the movements of my heart. Liberate my spirit from all affection for earthly things, that it may follow the sweet attractions of Thy grace, unimpeded. Teach me to make the proper use of these blessed days of preparation, that I may not through negligence, suffer the loss of the glorious fruits which Thou producest in recollected and fervent souls. Come, then, O Holy Ghost, and lavish upon me the plenitude of Thy graces. Come and establish in my heart the reign of Thy love and peace.

Resolution: By interior and exterior custody of the senses I will retire into the solitude of my heart, and strive to be profoundly recollected.

Spiritual Bouquet: "I will hear what the Lord shall say to my innermost soul."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary.

MEDITATION FOR TUESDAY

WE MUST PREPARE FOR THE HOLY GHOST BY PURITY OF HEART

"Create a clean heart in me, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. 50, 12).

First Prelude: Picture the disciples in the Cenacle at Jerusalem, preparing themselves for the reception of the Holy Ghost.

Second Prelude: O Holy Spirit, Thou Lover of purity and sanctity, let me realize how great an obstacle to the operation of Thy grace is the least voluntary fault.

First Point

VOLUNTARY VENIAL SINS HINDER THE EFFECTS OF THE HOLY GHOST

Deliberate venial sins, be they ever so slight, impede the bountiful operations of the Holy Ghost in our hearts. Are we not too indifferent concerning venial sins? Do we not regard a word, a vain thought, a gratification of curiosity or sensuality, a violation of charity, as matters of little importance? What a deception! Faith teaches us that God chastises venial sins with punishments which are often of longer duration and more intense, than the most excruciating pains that can be suffered in this world. A multitude of venial sins works havoc in the soul. They obstruct the channels of divine graces and inspirations, and weaken the fervor and the courage necessary to repulse the onslaughts of the Evil One. Thence follow blindness, weakness and frequent relapses into the same faults; gradually our heart becomes insensible and we hardly perceive a serious fall. If we take no pains to guard against venial sins, we run the greatest risk of being eternally lost, even though we should distinguish ourselves by external works of charity. We will, therefore, exercise the utmost caution to banish from our heart whatever might contaminate the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Let us often repeat the words of the Psalmist: "Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. 50, 12).

Have I a great horror of sin? Do I frequently ponder the words of St. Teresa to her spiritual daughters: "I am greatly concerned when I see that you do not grieve over your imperfections."

Second Point

WE MUST PURIFY OUR HEARTS OF ALL INORDINATE AFFECTIONS

If we would carefully guard against voluntary venial sins, we must strive to curb our evil propensities and inordinate inclinations, which nourish and foster sin. Only by carefully watching over our heart will we discover these tendencies to be the secret source of all our spiritual ills. Close self-scrutiny will reveal to us a veritable abyss of malice. What a disclosure of erroneous judgments, of inordinate desires, of seeking pleasures and gratifications of the senses, of tendencies so detestable that we should be ashamed to behold ourselves as we really are! If once, in the light of the Holy Ghost, we recognized our utter depravity, we would surely resolve to cleanse our heart of all inordinate affections. Well versed in the art of spiritual warfare, the enemy of our soul abhors nothing so much as the sight of interior souls striving zealously for the perfection of their holy state. He will suffer us to practice virtue outwardly, to serve the sick, the poor and the children entrusted to our care, even to labor for the salvation of others,—all of which not infrequently flatters self-love. But he detests our vigilance, the earnest investigation of our interior disorders, and the zealous endeavors to eradicate our faults. Unfortunately, we are altogether too much in harmony with him; we fear nothing more than to look our misery squarely in the face, because the realization of it is so humiliating and painful.

Do I strive to attain to ever greater purity of heart and a more complete mastery of my evil propensities, by vigilance and mortification?

Affections: Come, O Holy Spirit, and create a clean heart within me, a pure, innocent heart, which loves Thee alone. Fill me with a lively hatred and detestation of the least sin; give me a firm will with the aid of Thy divine grace to eradicate my evil inclinations. How could I tolerate the least stain on my soul and thus deprive myself of the blessed effects of Thy grace! Thou Lover of purity and sanctity! Holy Spirit, Who art called a consuming fire, annihilate in me all sinful and inordinate desires, all levity and every defect,—renew in my interior that sincere, upright spirit, which turns away from vanity and folly and strives solely to please Thee, my true and eternal goal, that Thou mayest inflame my heart, with the fire of Thy divine love and take up therein Thy permanent abode.

Resolution: I will carefully guard my heart, and preserve it from every voluntary fault.

Spiritual Bouquet: "A clean heart create in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

Prayer: Jesus, my Lord, my King . . .

MEDITATION FOR WEDNESDAY

TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GRACES OF THE HOLY GHOST, WE MUST LABOR ZEALOUSLY AT OUR SPIRITUAL REGENERATION

"Thou shalt send forth Thy spirit and they shall be created; and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth" (Ps. 103, 30).

First Prelude: Reverently join the holy assembly in the Supper Room, preparing for the reception of the Holy Ghost.

Second Prelude: O Holy Ghost, Thou Light of hearts, enlighten my interior with Thy grace, that I may discover my most secret faults, and tolerate nothing in me that is displeasing to Thee.

First Point

PRIDE, PARTICULARLY, RESISTS THE HOLY GHOST

Among all the passions of the human heart, pride is the most hidden, the most deep-seated and the one which we most frequently seek to satisfy. Now we are tempted to glory in advantages, real or imaginary; now to conceal, to belittle, or palliate our faults. How often do religious give evidence of pride, with whom as with the rebellious angels, it has its source in spiritual goods! Let us, therefore, be on our guard, for, whereas other evil inclinations assert themselves only in connection with sinful actions, pride manifests itself even in the good we do. How many, who for years had led a penitential life and apparently reached the pinnacle of perfection, fell deeply because, ruled by pride, they banished the Holy Ghost and His grace from their hearts and thus suffered the loss of a life-time of merit! We will, therefore, scrutinize every fibre of our heart and pray the Holy Ghost for true self-knowledge, which makes us humble and properly disposed to receive His bountiful visitations. We will seek humiliations, by acknowledging our faults not only to ourselves but also to others; by endeavoring to conceal the little good there may be in us, and desiring to be known and loved by God alone.

How often and on what occasions have I failed through pride? What must I do in particular to combat this vice?

Second Point

THE HOLY GHOST HAS NOTHING IN COMMON WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD

To all Christians, our Divine Saviour has said: "If anyone will be My disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me." The majority, however, live in exact contradiction with this sublime doctrine. Desiring to enjoy life, they deny themselves nothing, gratify their every passion and utterly lose sight of the inevitable law of penance, a consequence of the fall of our first parents. Such is the spirit of the world, diametrically opposed to the spirit of God, which St. James straightway designates as enmity of God: "Know ye not that the friendship of this world is an enemy of God?" Nothing is so detrimental to religious perfection as a worldly spirit, which, unfortunately, only too often seeks to gain access to the house of the Lord. In some, it manifests itself in a certain carelessness, which hinders their striving earnestly for perfection by enticing them to seek unnecessary worldly intercourse or to perform their spiritual exercises superficially. Others are slaves of sensuality, seek personal comfort and convenience, and even go so far as to complain when some of their wishes remain unfulfilled; others, again, are ruled by the spirit of sensitiveness; a little lack of attention, an innocent jest at their expense, a serious mien, the mere shadow of an insult, suffice to annoy them for days and induce them even to manifest their want of virtue outwardly. What a pitiful sight to find such as would be disciples of Christ without mortification, and spouses of the Crucified without crosses?

I will pray the Holy Ghost incessantly to grant me no

rest until, with His grace, I shall have banished the spirit of sensuality and worldliness, and shall have made the spirit of Jesus Christ the sole Ruler of my heart.

Affections: O my God, prostrate at Thy feet in profound humility and shame, I acknowledge my numerous faults and sins and my infidelities in Thy holy service. Alas, how seriously must the unclean dwelling of my heart displease Thy holy eye! But who other can cleanse it than Thou, through the power of Thy love, the strength of Thy grace? To whom else could I cry: "Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within me?" Forsake me not, in the struggle against my evil inclinations, especially pride, sensuality and levity. Sustain me in this earnest endeavor, that, supported by Thy grace, I may attain to that new life in virtue of which I can say in very truth: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2, 20).

Resolution: I will struggle with renewed energy against my predominant fault.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Bend the stubborn heart and will; melt the frozen, warm the chill; guide the steps that go astray."

Prayer: Soul of Christ.

MEDITATION FOR THURSDAY

THE HOLY GHOST, OUR TEACHER IN THE ART OF PRAYER

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groaning" (Rom. 8, 26).

First Prelude: Enter the holy assemblage in the Sup-

per Room and note the fervor and reverence with which the disciples pray in union with the Blessed Mother of God.

Second Prelude: O Holy Ghost, Thou Divine Teacher, I pray Thee quicken my zeal and support my prayer with Thy all-powerful aid.

First Point

THE HOLY GHOST TEACHES US HOW TO PRAY

Jesus had promised His disciples that the Holy Ghost, Whom He would send, should teach them all things. He, the Spirit of Love and Truth, should give them to understand the lessons that the Divine Master had taught them during the period of three years. By means of His enlightenments and inspiration the Holy Ghost should continue to the end of time the wondrous work begun by the Eternal Wisdom. The sublimest and most exalted of all sciences is prayer, interior communion with God, and herein, in particular, the Holy Ghost would be our Teacher, Who would teach us to pray according to the Words of St. Paul: "As it behooves us and sustains our weakness by the sweet unction of His divine grace." We will revert to Him, therefore, with unbounded trust, as often as we go to prayer, imploring His assistance that we may know what is good and wholesome for us.

We can, indeed, pronounce the words of the Lord's Prayer or the Divine Office; but without the grace of the Holy Ghost we are not of our own strength capable of a single pious thought. Being incompetent of ourselves to pray with devotion, with attention and fervor, let us ask the Holy Spirit to purify our heart. Should we not, therefore, heed the injunctions of our Holy Rule when

it exhorts us to commence our daily task and the chief exercises of devotion with an invocation of the Holy Ghost? The Holy Ghost in a very special manner is a Master of interior prayer, for through Him it is given us to comprehend the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. He elevates the truly humble soul to the knowledge of the eternal truths, as the author of the Imitation says: He teaches us contempt of earthly things, implicit and unbounded trust in Him, that we may desire naught save Him, and love to labor for Him and His interests. How prudent and happy are souls that hearken to the voice of their Divine Master Who would teach them how to pray!

What a rapid transformation will the Spirit of Holiness effect in their hearts! What facility will they acquire in confiding, trustful prayer!

Second Point

THE HOLY GHOST PRAYS IN AND FOR US

It would not suffice for the Holy Ghost to enlighten and assist us in prayer; He would pray in and for us, as St. Paul observes, with inexpressible groanings. Our Blessed Saviour is our advocate with the Father, as St. John assures us: "But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Just" (1 John 2, 1). The Holy Ghost speaks in us, writes the Apostle: "For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of the Father, that speaketh in you" (Matt. 10, 20). Oh, what efficacy will attach to our prayers if the Holy Ghost Himself prays with us and in us! Let us consider, however, that He will impart His gracious assistance only to such as zealously co-operate with His grace. He will assist our weakness and supply our deficiency. We must, therefore, make every effort to render our heart a pleasing abode

to the Spirit of Holiness, by fervor in prayer and by perfect submission to the holy Will of God. If we spare no pains, the Holy Ghost will aid us in the measure of our exertion, and impart to us that tender filial piety which elevates us to the most intimate union with the highest Good and constitutes our sole happiness. What a consoling thought! The Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, Himself prays in us! Must not such a thought animate and quicken our faith, strengthen our hope and inflame our heart anew with the fire of Divine Love? Let us abase ourselves profoundly in His holy Presence, and be circumspect lest we grieve Him by our coldness and tepidity!

Was I not frequently guilty of irreverence and lack of devotion in prayer, utterly forgetful of the debt I owe the Divine Majesty?

Affections: Most adorable Holy Spirit, how grateful ought I be to Thee for having bound Thyself to pray for me and to assist my unworthy prayers! Why have I been so unmindful of Thy holy presence? Why have I so seldom had recourse to Thy infinite goodness for help in my misery and utter inability? With humble and contrite heart I acknowledge my fault and entreat Thy pardon. Full of reverence and childlike trust, I will henceforth say: "Lord, teach me how to pray." Let me understand the words my lips utter,—penetrate my heart, with a holy ardor, quicken my faith, strengthen my hope, and inflame anew the fire of divine love, that it may consume whatever would hinder the bountiful operations of Thy grace.

Resolution: I will invoke the Holy Ghost with special fervor before every prayer and in all difficulties beg His assistance.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of Thy Love."

Prayer: Our Father . . .

MEDITATION FOR FRIDAY

THE HOLY GHOST INSTRUCTS US IN THE ART OF SANCTITY

"Today when you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts" (Ps. 94).

First Prelude: Unite yourself most intimately with your Blessed Mother and the disciples in the Supper Room in devout prayer awaiting the coming of the Holy Ghost, the Teacher and Dispenser of all holiness.

Second Prelude: O Holy Spirit, make me receptive for Thy holy inspirations, and generous in complying with them, that under Thy divine guidance I may advance rapidly on the path of holiness.

First Point

THE HOLY GHOST WOULD LEAD US TO SANCTITY

It is the mission of the Holy Ghost not only to govern and preserve the Church from all harm to the end of time, but, through His grace, to render her fruitful in works of holiness and sanctity. He desires to bring forth in the Church saints and children of God. He would form apostles who will spread the Church in all the world,—martyrs, who, by their blood will testify to the purity and truth of her doctrine,—teachers, who will enlighten her by their knowledge,—and hosts of elect, who, by their virtuous lives, will be a source of edification and

will constitute her glory and renown. He desires to erect in every soul the edifice of sanctification and justice according to the infinite plans of the Eternal Wisdom. How marvelous! The great God in His incomprehensible mercy condescends to guide and direct the human soul and thus render her worthy of her lofty destination! He asks for admittance into our hearts by means of holy inspirations, and if we lend Him a willing ear, He will enter, take possession of our hearts, and diffuse heavenly light and grace. He attracts souls by the sweet unction of His grace, vouchsafes them a realization of the beauty and lovableness of virtue and sanctity, and imparts strength for the execution, of the once recognized good.

Again, He warns and admonishes thoughtless and distracted souls, reproves unfaithful souls with a holy severity, and in punishment deprives them of the light and comfort of His holy presence. He is a prudent Teacher, Who deals with souls according to their disposition, zealously eager to have His lessons well taken to heart; a tender Father, Who is deeply concerned in the welfare of his beloved children, and Who will exhaust Himself to render them truly happy. How enviable are those whom the Holy Ghost has in early youth led into His school, and trained to sanctity under His watchful eye! Oh that all who have been called to religious perfection, and whom the Holy Ghost assists with so many special inspirations, would adequately treasure such happiness, and in a spirit of gratitude faithfully correspond to His tender solicitude and love!

Am I mindful that every good thought, every inspiration, every desire for perfection, is an inspiration of the Holy Ghost? To the practice of which virtue does He impel me most frequently?

Second Point

IT IS OUR DUTY TO FOLLOW THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY GHOST

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" (Sph. 4, 30) said the Apostle, "by resisting Him." He guides by divine inspirations only souls who have surrendered themselves to Him, and advances them in perfection in the measure of their fidelity. How solicitous should we, therefore, be to hear and heed His voice, and generously make all the sacrifices, however difficult they may be, that are inseparable from the faithful discharge of our duties! Would we perceive the promptings of the Holy Ghost, we must retire into the solitude of our hearts, and listen with a docile mind to the voice of grace. Happy the souls, we read in the Imitation, who hear the Lord in the depths of their heart. Blessed the ears that are closed to the world but attentive to the interior lessons of truth. Attention to the promptings of the Holy Ghost must be accompanied by fidelity and perseverance in doing good, for what should His direction profit those who entirely, or in part, neglect to follow them! His graces would only be a cause of new and graver responsibility.

Oh, that we would realize the danger of abusing the proffered grace! St. Teresa was shown the place in hell that was to be her doom provided she would continue to resist the grace of God, when it demanded of her the combat of vanity and self-love. Had St. Anthony ignored the grace offered Him through the reading of the gospel, he should not have become a holy anchoret and wonder-worker. The Holy Ghost loves strong and noble souls, who obey His voice unhesitatingly, cost what it may. To what progress will He not incite them on the path of perfection!

Am I attentive and docile to the voice of the Holy Spirit?

Affections: O Holy Spirit, Thou Lover of purity and Dispenser of all sanctity! Thou seekest noble and docile souls who labor and struggle courageously for love of Thee. Oh, that I had always lent an attentive and reverent ear to Thy loving admonitions! What progress in virtue should I have made, and what happiness and blessed peace should now be mine! Pardon me, O Holy Spirit, for having suffered the precious spark of Thy Divine Love to die out in my heart. Forsake me not on account of my infidelities! Do not cease to speak to my soul. I will henceforth obey Thy sweet voice and surrender myself wholly to Thy divine guidance.

Resolution: I will heed the inspirations of the Holy Ghost and make the sacrifices He requires of me.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Come Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of the faithful and enkindle in them the fire of Thy divine Love."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR SATURDAY

IMMEDIATE PREPARATION FOR THE FEAST OF PENTECOST

"Come, Holy Ghost, Father of the poor, Dispenser of heavenly gifts; come, Thou Light of hearts" (Office of Holy Church).

First Prelude: Remain in spirit in the Cenacle, with the Apostles and disciples imploring the Holy Ghost to come down upon us.

Second Prelude: O Holy Spirit, let me realize my utter spiritual misery, and also Thy desire to relieve it that my heart may be inflamed with an intense desire for Thy advent.

First Point

THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF OUR SPIRITUAL POVERTY SHOULD AWAKEN IN US A STRONG DESIRE FOR THE HOLY GHOST

The intense desire for the graces of the Holy Ghost is the first requisite for participation in His bountiful gifts. This desire is so pleasing to the Holy Spirit that He will assuredly satisfy it, with a superabundance of heavenly favors. That we may be able to excite such a burning ardor in our hearts, we must recognize our dire spiritual poverty, which the Holy Ghost alone has power to enrich. Spiritual poverty consists in the destitution of all merits and virtues. Let us examine ourselves with regard to the greatest of all commandments, in which all the others are involved. How feeble is our love! Upon close scrutiny, we frequently find love of self in place of love of God,—selfishness and egotism crowding out love of neighbor. It is true, occasionally we perform works of charity, but are they not for the most part acts of virtue without foundation, without warmth and unction? Greater still should be our spiritual poverty if it were accompanied by a blindness and insensibility, hindering us from realizing our utter misery. Cannot the Holy Ghost in very truth say to such souls what we read in the Revelations: "He that hath the substance of this world and shall see his brother in need and shall shut up his heart from him; how doth the charity of God abide in him?" (3, 17).

The Holy Ghost delights to pour Himself forth in humble souls in whom He finds no obstacles and who implore His grace with persevering zeal. Let us, therefore, cry from the abyss of our unworthiness: Come, Thou Father of the poor and helper of the lowly! Behold, I am exceedingly poor and needy. I have indeed plunged myslf into this abyss of poverty and indigence

by failing to utilize the graces and inspirations Thou didst offer me so profusely, but come, and enrich me with all good gifts worthy of God. From Thy Goodness, which cannot despise a humble and contrite heart, I hope all things.

Second Point

THE HOLY GHOST DESIRES TO ENRICH US WITH HIS GRACES

The contemplation of our extreme poverty and lack of virtue will serve to enkindle in our hearts an ardent longing for the Holy Ghost, the Dispenser of heavenly goods. To augment our desire and to imbue our hearts with implicit trust in the omnipotent love of the Divine Comforter, let us consider the infinite goodness and mercy of the Holy Ghost, Whose delight it is to endow us with spiritual goods and to enrich our poverty with the wealth of His graces. "For I am the Lord, thy God, Who brought thee out of the land of Egypt; open thy mouth wide and I will fill it" (Ps. 80, 11), that is, expand your heart by burning desires, open your mouth in prayer, persevere in ardent supplications and you will be satiated with the superabundance of heavenly treasures.

How the Holy Ghost rejoices when He can pour out His graces profusely upon creatures! Nothing grieves Him more deeply than our indifference and blindness, which impede the flow of divine grace into our hearts. Let us strengthen our spiritual vision by earnest prayer. If we deserve the reproach of faithlessness to His inspirations, of failure to obey His counsels, we must humbly acknowledge our guilt and implore His pardon. Oh, that we knew the value of a single grace! But let us not be brought to waver in confidence by our utter unworthiness. The Holy Ghost is the God of love, and as such, imparts His graces as generously to sinners as to

the just, provided the former have the sincere good will to break with sin. Prayer, alone, will not insure a generous measure of supernatural light and strength. To win this greatest of treasures, this good that transcends all goods, we must immolate our favorite inclinations. May the intensity of our desire melt our cold hearts and set them aglow with the fervor that should fill the hearts of all the children of Holy Church today!

Which sacrifices will I make to-day to prepare myself for the coming of the Holy Ghost?

Affections: Come, Holy Ghost, Father of the poor and Dispenser of heavenly goods! Enlighten my understanding that I may realize my indigence; move my heart, that in all humility and compunction I may bewail my past infidelity; incite my will that I may resolutely combat whatever displeases Thee in me. Come, Holy Ghost, and effect my spiritual regeneration that I may love nothing, henceforth, save Thee, my Supreme Good, seek all my joy and happiness in Thee, and humbly adore the dispensations of Thy loving Providence. Come, Holy Ghost, my heart longs for Thee, with an insatiable desire. O holy Virgin, who didst strengthen the Apostles and disciples by the example of thy fervent prayer, to thee I have recourse today with the fervent petition that thou wouldst take me into thy motherly keeping and prepare my heart, that for the sake of thy merits, the Holy Ghost may pour out in it the fulness of His grace.

Resolution: In union with our Blessed Mother, we will fervently implore the Holy Ghost and prepare our hearts by acts of mortification and self-denial.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Come, Thou Father of the poor, Dispenser of grace, Light of Hearts!"

Prayer: Our Father.

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST DAYS FROM ADVENT TO PENTECOST

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF ST. ANDREW, APOSTLE

November 30th

"The next day again John stood and two of his disciples. And beholding Jesus walking, he saith: 'Behold, the Lamb of God.' And the two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus" (John 1, 35, 37).

First Prelude: Imagine St. Andrew following Jesus immediately on hearing the words of St. John.

Second Prelude: O Jesus, Who with so much love hast called St. Andrew to Thy service, help us to correspond to the grace of vocation and to become faithful disciples of the cross.

First Point

THE CALLING OF ST. ANDREW

Andrew was a faithful follower of the holy precursor of our Divine Saviour, whose his zeal merited for him the happiness of being the first called by Jesus. As Jesus walked about, St. John pointed Him out with the words: "Behold, the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world." Andrew immediately understood the call of grace and did not hesitate one moment to answer it.

When Andrew, together with the other disciple, in answer to the invitation, walked after Jesus, but out of reverence dared not address Him, the Master Himself paused and turned to him saying: "What seek you?" O infinite goodness of Jesus! He knew the wish of the disciples to remain with Him, and also their timidity, therefore He willed to encourage them to express their wish.

If Jesus should ask me: "What seek you?" could I answer: "I seek Thy glory and honor, the salvation of my soul and of the souls entrusted to me," or should I be compelled to confess that in my works of piety and charity I seek myself, my honor and the satisfaction of self-love? If in reality I seek Jesus why, then, do I fear humiliations, why am I disheartened at failure in my undertakings, and why do I yield to sensitiveness when recognition and appreciation are denied me? Answering our Lord with the counter-question, "Master, where dwellest Thou?" Andrew and his companions heard the happy response: "Come and see." O sweet word of goodness and love, which filled the two disciples with consolation and joy, because it gave them the assurance that the Redeemer will not cast them away, but will be their Leader and their Master! Jesus addresses the same words to the soul that has answered His first invitation to a life of perfection: "Come and see My life of poverty, of obedience, of mortification and charity and imitate it. Be pure as I am pure, obedient, poor and devoted, like to Me in all things." Have I, in the past, faithfully corresponded to the invitations of my Saviour, or have I not often paused on the way because I deemed it too hard or rugged? O Jesus, grant me grace, from this day forward, like St. Andrew, to follow Thee on the way of perfection, with cheerful determination and fidelity.

Second Point

THE ZEAL OF ST. ANDREW AND HIS LOVE OF THE CROSS

Hardly had St. Andrew found Jesus and begun to taste the delights of His company, His discourses and His teachings, when his heart was aglow with love of Jesus and apostolic zeal, and he longed for an opportunity to lead others to Jesus and make them sharers in his happiness. The evangelist tells us: "When Andrew left Jesus, he found first his brother, Simon Peter, and said to him: 'We have found the Messiah' and he brought him to Jesus" (John 1, 41). What wonderful success was the reward of his apostolic zeal! He was deemed worthy to lead to Jesus him who was chosen to be the head of the Church, and the rock upon which Christ would build His Church. We, too, have been called to works of zeal for the salvation of others. True, we dare not neglect our own salvation, but at the same time, we must be mindful, as was St. Andrew, to lead others to Jesus, especially the children entrusted to our care. Let us do this zealously, even though we do it more by our good example than by our words. Let us endeavor to spread the knowledge and love of Christ by acts of mortification, by poverty and self-denial, which our charges have a right to expect of us.

Andrew did not follow Jesus only in his zeal for souls, he also shared the Saviour's love of the cross. Instructed by his first master, St. John the Baptist, he had begun to walk the way of penance and mortification; in the school of Jesus he heard the lesson of the cross, which his Divine Master taught by word and example. He shared the extreme poverty of the Son of God, Who had not whereon

to lay His head, suffered with Him through the hate and persecutions of the pharisees, and finally saw Him die on the cross. Now there commenced for him the laborious life of the apostolate, in which he waxed strong in practical love of the cross to such a degree that at sight of the wood of sacrifice, on which he was to die, he exclaimed in holy ecstasy: "O holy cross, O venerable cross, for which I have so ardently longed, which I have loved so tenderly, and constantly sought, and by which now all my desires shall be fulfilled!"

Do I desire to suffer for my Jesus? Do I patiently bear the crosses that His love inflicts on me, and do I in the spirit of penance and zeal for souls show my love of the Crucified by the voluntary assumption of acts of mortification?

Affections: O Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, in infinite love Thou hast called me, like St. Andrew, to the apostolic career. Impart to me, I pray Thee, through the merits of Thy holy Apostle, a spark of that zeal for souls which filled his heart, that I may lead many souls to Thy Sacred Heart. Impart to me a spark of the love of the cross which filled the heart of St. Andrew, that I may at all times carry my daily cross cheerfully and patiently for love of Thee and in union with Thy infinite merits, and so be made worthy to glorify Thee through the cross and win many souls to Thy love.

Resolution: We will cheerfully make every sacrifice for which opportunity presents itself, and encourage others, by our example, to love the cross.

Spiritual Bouquet: "O holy cross, let me through thee attain to Him, Who redeemed me through thee!"

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

December 3d

"The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up" (Ps. 68).

First Prelude: Picture the Apostle of India, with the crucifix in hand, announcing the gospel.

Second Prelude: O my God, grant that in imitation of the glorious St. Francis, I may become wholly converted to Thee, and a fit instrument to lead others to Thy love.

First Point

THE CALL OF GRACE ADDRESSED TO ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

Endowed with the most brilliant gifts of mind, St. Francis Xavier was at the verge of entering upon a glorious worldly career when the words of St. Ignatius: "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world, if he suffer the loss of his own soul?" opened to him the eyes of faith. He realized that all earthly glory is naught, and that there is no greater honor than to follow the Son of God in poverty, humility, and renunciation. Francis heeded the voice of grace, and soon his heart glowed with the fire of divine love, which Jesus had enkindled upon earth. Animated by this love of Jesus, Francis found no humiliation too great, no renunciation too bitter. His favorite resort was in the hospitals, where he devoted himself to the most abject duties in the service of the sick. The sweetest joy of soul was his in these lowly ministrations to the favored portion of God's own,—the poor. Animated by the profoundest respect for his spiritual

father, St. Ignatius, he held himself in readiness, humbly obedient to leave his flourishing missionary field in India, at the first intimation of the Saint to return to Europe.

St. Francis Xavier is also a shining example of the love of poverty. He was content with the most necessary in food and clothing, and like a pauper he cleansed his own linens and tolerated not the least assistance, whereas he, in truth, was the servant of all. Such virtues blossomed in the soul of the saint by reason of his faithful co-operation with the grace of God. Dare I assume that my consecration to God was perfect? I may, if my love of humiliation and renunciation testify in this respect. How remote am I from the profound humility and ready obedience of St. Francis Xavier! Great saint, obtain for me the grace to enter into the designs of God with greater fidelity than heretofore and to refuse Him no sacrifice.

Second Point

APOSTOLIC ZEAL OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

In the measure in which St. Francis progressed in the love of God, his heart expanded in the love of immortal souls and the intense desire for their salvation. There was no work of apostolic zeal which his heart did not ardently embrace. He instructed children, consoled the sick in the hospitals, and the imprisoned. Thirsting for souls he visited all parts of India, corrected the morals and won whole kingdoms and empires to the faith of Christ. With mildness and goodness he sought out souls that had strayed from the cross of Christ and found no sacrifice too great when there was question of reclaiming one soul to the love of the Crucified. When he had thus labored during the day, the night found him pouring out

his heart to God in fervent prayer for poor sinners. God revealed to him in advance the hardships that awaited him, the sufferings that he should have to endure, but, animated with the fire of divine love, Francis cried out: "More, O Lord, yet more!" Barefoot, he walked over the burning sand, having no other couch than the bare ground, no other nourishment than bread which he had begged; but in the midst of these sacrifices and hardships inundated with heavenly consolations, he wrote: "I am everywhere full of joy and know nothing sweeter than for the love of Jesus Christ and the salvation of immortal souls, to live in continual dangers."

What is my disposition toward suffering and renouncement? Do I assist, by sacrifices and prayers, in the conversion of sinners, of infidels and heretics? Do I thus second the efforts of those who are called to labor directly at the salvation of souls, especially in distant lands? Am I filled with such love of God and of souls still dripping with the Precious Blood of the Crucified that every work and exertion to which I submit in the service of God appears insignificant?

Affections: Glorious Apostle of Jesus Christ, St. Francis Xavier, who hast enlightened the nations by the light of thy doctrine and the sanctity of thy life, we pray that thou implore for all apostolic laborers thy intense love of God and intrepid zeal for souls, and obtain for them the grace to spread the kingdom of Christ. Pray, also, for the members of our congregation, that by lively faith, ardent love, fiery zeal, and tender piety, each one of us may draw down upon our institute and our labors the richest blessings of heaven.

Resolution: I will begin this hour to overcome myself in that which is most repugnant to nature, and offer

these victories over self to God for the salvation of souls.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Grant, O God, that zeal for Thy honor consume me."

Prayer: "Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE EVE OF THE FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

December 7th

"The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before He made anything from the beginning" (Prov. 8, 22).

First Prelude: Behold that great sign in the heavens which St. John describes in the Apocalypse: "A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Apoc. 12, 1).

Second Prelude: O Immaculate Virgin, who from the beginning wast the object of the special love of the Triune God, and the hope of mankind, obtain for me of thy Divine Son the pardon of all my sins and the grace of perfect fidelity.

First Point

FROM ALL ETERNITY MARY WAS THE OBJECT OF THE SPECIAL PLEASURE OF THE MOST BLESSED TRINITY

From all eternity God had elected Mary to be the Mother of His only-begotten Son. Therefore, He has from all eternity decreed to endow her with supernatural graces and virtues corresponding to so sublime a dignity. Above all, He imparted sanctifying grace to her even in the moment of her conception so that Mary, alone, of all the descendants of Adam, entered this world free from

original sin. He further adorned her soul with the three divine virtues of faith, hope, and charity. God foresaw with what fidelity Mary would, during every moment of her life, co-operate with these graces, and thus increase the beauty of her soul and the treasure of her merits. With what complacence must the eye of God have rested on Mary from the beginning! O my God, how I thank Thee for having endowed Mary, the Mother of Thy Son, with rare graces and marvelous prerogatives! I rejoice with all the choirs of angels, with all the saints of heaven and all children of Holy Church over her exalted dignity and sublime glory. I thank Thee for having in Mary called into existence a creature resplendent in consummate purity and sanctity, of whom Thou couldst say: "Thou art all fair, My beloved, and there is not a spot in thee" (Cant. 4, 7).

I, too, was present in the designs of God, before the creation of the world; He thought of me, and ordered the means of my sanctification. He chose me to be a child of the true Church, to be born and to die in her. In infinite goodness and mercy He vouchsafed me the rare and especial grace, the call to the religious state, the invitation to follow Him, to lead a life of sanctity and perfection. But, alas, how poorly have I corresponded to these graces! I have, indeed, followed the divine call which led me from the turbulent sea of the world into the haven of religious life; but how negligent have I been in the service of God, how tepid in my religious exercises, since the day of my entrance! Mary corresponded with great fidelity to every grace, and never refused God a sacrifice; I, on the contrary, have forfeited countless graces, and shrink from the least sacrifice. I am far from being, like Mary, an object of especial com-

placency of God. On the contrary, His all-holy eye can look only with displeasure on my many faults and infidelities. O Mary, by thy Immaculate Conception, obtain for me the grace of perfect purity of body and soul.

Second Point

FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD MARY WAS THE HOPE OF MANKIND

The Almighty had chosen Mary to co-operate in the mysteries of our redemption in so far as this was possible for a human being. After the fall of our first parents, God had promised her as the mystic woman who should crush the serpent's head. From the beginning, the hopeful eyes of all mankind were fixed upon Mary, and she was the subject of the prophecies, of the types of the Old Testament, and the desire of the patriarchs. The long-desired moment having come, Mary appears as the Immaculate Virgin, as the Woman full of grace, the Morning Star, which announces the advent of the Sun of Justice. How many hopes were resuscitated at her birth! Through her the Redeemer should be given to the world. In her chaste womb He willed to clothe Himself with a human nature and take unto Himself the Body that should one day be immolated for us on Calvary. Mary is even now the mediatrix between God and man; her spotless hands offer our prayers to the Most High; her petitions second our entreaties. She is the ark of the New Covenant, through which they who confidently fly to her shall be saved from the perilous flood of sin. O Mary, would that my heart could ever love thee sufficiently, and thank thee worthily for all the graces which it is thy privilege to impart to us. With all creation, with all the angels

and saints I offer thee the homage of my love and veneration.

Affections: O my God, I thank Thee for the extraordinary grace with which Thou hast adorned the Blessed Virgin, by preserving her from the stain of sin. I offer to Thy divine Majesty all the honor and glory which Mary, the purest and holiest of Virgins, has prepared for Thee from the first moment of her Immaculate Conception. With her pure and most acceptable sacrifice I unite the oblation and surrender of myself, and pray Thee, by the merits and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, conceived without sin, to accept it with pleasure and to bless it, that it may redound to Thy greater honor and glory. And thou, O purest of Virgins, who didst so faithfully correspond to the grace of thy Immaculate Conception pray for me, that from henceforth I may faithfully use every grace that God imparts to me.

Resolution: I will be faithful to the inspirations of grace, and watch over my heart cautiously to preserve it from the least stain of sin.

Spiritual Bouquet: "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee."

Prayer: Remember, O Most gracious Virgin . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

December 8th

"As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters" (Cant. 2, 2).

First Prelude: In spirit enter the august assembly in which Pius IX announced to the world the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

Second Prelude: Grant me the grace, O God, to venerate the mystery of the Immaculate Conception worthily, and like the Blessed Virgin, to use the graces received faithfully.

First Point

MARY WAS CONCEIVED WITHOUT SIN AND AT THE MOMENT OF HER CONCEPTION ENDOWED WITH THE CHOICEST GRACES.

It was becoming the honor of the Son of God that she whom He wished to elevate to the dignity of Divine Maternity should be preserved from the stain of original sin. It was meet that she who was destined to crush the serpent's head should not for one moment be under the dominion of Satan. The saintly Pius IX writes in an encyclical: "God has overwhelmed Mary with such a plenitude of His graces that, free from all stain of sin, beautiful and perfect, she possesses a purity and sanctity such as, next to God, no one else possesses or can even imagine." In her Immaculate Conception, Mary is the Lily among the thorns, the spotless Virgin who delights the eyes of the Blessed Trinity with her purity. Therefore God loved the Blessed Virgin from the first moment of her existence with predilection; He loved her as the Master-piece of His hand, as the object of His complacence, as His most perfect image. O pure and spotless Virgin, what joy swells my heart when I think of the inexpressible prerogative that distinguishes Thee!

The contemplation of this mystery calls to my mind the graces that God has bestowed upon me. It reminds me of holy baptism, in which, shortly after entering into this world, I was made a child of God, and liberated from the power of Satan; of the grace of my profession, which

anew imparted perfect purity to my soul. But, alas, how have I repeatedly sullied this purity by my many faults and imperfections! How have I darkened its lustre by venial sins! O my Saviour, through the intercession of Thy Immaculate Mother, grant me the grace that the purity of my soul be renewed and I preserve it carefully until death, to the last moment of my life. The prerogative of her Immaculate Conception exempted the Blessed Virgin from the three-fold concupiscence and all consequences of original sin. Her understanding was enlightened, her sentiments and her will were directed to good. Thus Mary proceeded, a second Eve, in immaculate purity, from the hands of her Creator, endowed with all graces and prerogatives of justice and sanctity, so that from the first moment of her existence she surpassed all the angels and saints in sanctity and grace. O holiest Virgin, who can worthily praise thee? Truly the Most High has in thee sanctified His dwelling. Help me to go ever onward on the path of virtue, that I may be able to offer thy Son, Who daily enters my heart, a pure dwelling.

Second Point

MARY CORRESPONDED WITH PERFECT FIDELITY TO THE GRACES IMPARTED TO HER

Mary was always faithful in co-operating with the graces she received. The first affection of her Immaculate Heart was an act of perfect love of God, and a complete surrender to His holy Will. Her whole life was the execution of this first act of surrender to God. Ever attentive to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, Who had chosen her heart as His temple, Mary knew no other care or solicitude, than to conform in all things to the Will of

God, to have no other aim than to glorify and please God in all things. What incomprehensibly rapid progress must Mary have made in virtue of such holy sentiments! The spiritual writers assure us that the graces with which the Blessed Trinity endowed the Mother of God in the first moment of her existence, increased with every moment, owing to Mary's fidelity in co-operating with them, so that it is impossible for the mind of man to conceive the dignity, the sublimity of the perfection which Mary attained. Thou faithful Virgin, thus thou didst prepare for the sublime dignity that the Almighty had destined for thee,—oh, beg for me the grace that I may at last begin to serve God faithfully.

God does not require of me consummate virtue and perfection such as are only within the reach of a spotless creature like the Blessed Virgin; He knows my weakness, and the demands He makes of me are always commensurate with the talents entrusted to me. But He can and does require of me to conform in all things to His holy Will, to employ all my strength and energy for His honor and glory. This God desires of me and I must continuously renew my holy resolve with all the ardor of my soul, since it is the only means of repairing my past infidelities and making myself worthy of an abundance of His graces.

Affections: O Mary, my dearest Mother, thou immaculate and purest of Virgins, in all humility I offer thee the homage of my veneration and love. I rejoice at the great dignity and glory with which the Almighty has replenished thee, as also the perfect fidelity with which thou hast corresponded to all graces. Oh, implore for me and all members of our congregation the grace to imitate thy fidelity, and to surrender ourselves unreservedly to the Divine Will. We, too, have offered ourselves with heart

and soul and body, with all our faculties and all our strength to the service and glory of God. O Queen of Virgins, entreat for us the grace to serve thy Son with spotless purity and perfection, here below, that we may one day be numbered among the hosts of virgins that follow the Lamb, to glorify Him for all eternity.

Resolution: We will be faithful to every inspiration of grace, and perform all our actions with perfect love of God.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Thou art all fair, My Beloved, and there is no stain in thee."

Prayer: Remember, O most gracious Virgin . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

SUNDAY AFTER THE CIRCUMCISION

(January 2d, when there is not a Sunday between the 2d and 5th inclusive.)

"And in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth" (Phil. 2, 10).

First Prelude: Imagine you hear the angel saying to St. Joseph: "And thou shalt call His name Jesus. For He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1, 21).

Second Prelude: O sweet Jesus, grant us the grace to pronounce Thy holy name with great devotion and to invoke it with perfect confidence, that we may ever experience its power.

First Point

THE NAME OF JESUS EMBODIES ALL THE POWER AND GLORY OF THE GOD-MAN

When the prophet Isaias announced the Saviour and called Him the "Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Almighty, the Father of the world to come, The Prince of

Peace" (Is. 9, 6), he expressed in these various names all the magnanimity that the holy name embraces; for Jesus is wonderful in the incomprehensible union of both natures constituting the Person of the God-Man. He is the Counsellor of the Most High, because in His attribute of Saviour He presents the cause of His redeemed. The prophet calls Him "God the Almighty" because by His death He called to life His chosen people; He is the Prince of Peace, Who by the shedding of His Precious Blood, has reconciled heaven with earth. These glorious titles applied to our Lord by Holy Scripture are like rays encircling the holy name of Jesus, as with a halo.

Oh, that we could appropriately esteem and love this holy name! As kings and princes are honored on their feasts with gifts, so we too, will offer gifts to our Divine King on the feast of His holy name. But what will be the most pleasing to Him? A saint once asked this of Jesus, and was answered: "Give me all thy misery." Let us heed the wish of our Saviour and give Him all our misery, our sinfulness, our weakness, that He may sanctify and strengthen us. He, the Wonderful, can transform our weakness into strength; He, the most wise Counsellor, Who is Himself the Way, the Truth and the Life, will direct and guide us. To Him, the Father of the world to come, we will confidently entrust our future that He, the mighty God, may lead us safely through battle to victory, and as Prince of Peace, to eternal peace.

Second Point

SENTIMENTS WHICH THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS SHOULD INSTILL INTO OUR HEARTS

If we understand the significance of the holy name of Jesus, sentiments of loving gratitude will be awakened

in our soul. The Son of God assumed the name of Jesus because it signifies His divine mission—our redemption. The mere mention of this holy name reminds us of all the sacrifices, of all the mysteries of His earthly life and of the plenitude of graces He has merited for us. Furthermore, this name fills the soul with confidence, since it is the name of our most tender Father, our dearest Friend, our most powerful protector. The name of Jesus causes hell to tremble and the evil spirits to flee. Christ Himself refers to the power of His holy name in the following words: "And these signs shall follow them that believe: In My name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay their hands upon the sick and they shall recover" (Mark 16, 17-1).

Had we but confidently invoked the holy name of Jesus, in all our necessities we should always have experienced its power. Finally, this name inspires us with loving reverence. It is not sufficient to utter this name frequently; our heart, our spirit, our will, our whole soul must be penetrated with the deepest reverence for it. This reverence cannot be testified in a better manner than by following the advice of St. Paul: "All whatsoever you do in word or work, do all in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (Col. 3, 17). The Apostle of the Gentiles says "All whatsoever you do"; he excludes nothing, for even the least and most indifferent actions can be sanctified through the sweet name of Jesus. Do I always pronounce the sacred name of Jesus with the most profound reverence, and does my exterior deportment manifest my interior sentiment?

Affections: O my God, in profound humility, I thank Thee for giving to me in the sweet name of Jesus the key to the treasury of Thy grace. Grant that I may rightly understand its significance, and be ever mindful of the great promises Thy Divine Son has attached to the devout invocation of His holy name, so that, invoking it with perfect confidence, I may merit to be heard by Thee. I will perform all my actions in the name of Jesus, in order to make them pleasing to Thee. O my Saviour, impress Thy sweet name on my heart. May I always pronounce it with profound reverence, especially at the moment of death,—may I magnify it through all eternity.

Resolution: I will say the salutation, "Praised be Jesus Christ," with especial devotion.

Spiritual Bouquet: "O Jesus, be to me Jesus and save me."

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY

SUNDAY WITHIN OCTAVE OF THE EPIPHANY

"And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them" (Luke 2, 45).

First Prelude: Picture the interior of the cottage at Nazareth and its occupants, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, pursuing their daily tasks.

Second Prelude: O my God, teach me how to lead a perfect life in imitation of the Holy Family.

First Point

THE LIFE OF THE HOLY FAMILY WAS A LIFE OF PRAYER

It is the duty of man to acknowledge God as his supreme Lord and Creator, to render Him homage, to praise and thank Him. This duty is discharged, primarily, through prayer. How fervently Jesus prayed to the heavenly Father, during His hidden life! Was He not come upon earth to reconcile sinful man with the offended Majesty of God, and to restore in infinite measure the honor of the heavenly Father? What homage of adoration, praise and thanksgiving did His Heart tender the Most High at every moment of His earthly life,—a homage more precious in the sight of God than the praise of all the blessed spirits! Mary and Joseph, these two purest hearts, singled out by God to dwell in closest union with His beloved Son, united their prayers with those of Jesus, to praise, thank and extol the eternal goodness of God.

Could there be a nobler occupation for religious, who enjoy seclusion from the world and its fleeting pleasures, than in union with Jesus and Mary to lead a life consecrated to the honor of God, to praise and thank Him every day of their lives? By fervent prayer and penance, they can render reparation to God for the many sins by which He is daily offended and dishonored. But Jesus, likewise, thought of poor sinful man in His prayers in the seclusion of Nazareth. How may He have felt Himself constrained to go forth as the Good Shepherd to seek the lost sheep and gather them about Himself and feed them with the precious morsels of His doctrine! But His time had not yet come. Though Eternal Wisdom Itself,

and full of grace, He willed to await in seclusion the moment designated by the heavenly Father,—His thirtieth year. During this time He prayed for poor, fallen creatures that the grace of redemption be not lost in them. His omniscient eye peered into the centuries and implored grace for all who should ever long to be His own, especially for those who would follow close in His footsteps among the chosen few in the garden of the religious state. In the retirement at Nazareth Jesus prayed for each one of us, and entreated sufficient grace for us to walk in His footsteps by the exercise of compassionate love and thus continue His divine apostolate, as it were, on earth. Oh, let us pray the Divine Bridegroom of souls for grace to correspond to His call and conscientiously utilize the time set aside by our Holy Rule for prayer and the exercises of devotion, that we may deserve to mediate God's blessing upon our fellow-laborers, and especially upon those whom God has confided to our care. In particular, let us try to draw copiously from the great spiritual treasure placed at our disposal in the Sacrifice of the Mass and Holy Communion, that the Inspired Word may be truly verified in us, and we may gain all to Christ.

Second Point

THE LIFE OF THE HOLY FAMILY WAS ONE OF LABOR

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Mos. 3, 19), God said to Adam in Paradise, and in these words imposed upon man labor as duty and law. Jesus, Who had come upon earth to accomplish the Will of the heavenly Father in all things, submitted to this law and devoted the greater part of His life to the toilsome labors of an artisan. Doing this, He sanctified labor for all time.

Our Divine Saviour labored under the direction of St. Joseph, and He Who created the world in its exquisite beauty, carried out minutely every commission and injunction of His holy Foster-father. Let us learn from our Divine Exemplar to love the humble and hidden labors, and always to perform them in accordance with the wish of our superiors, even should we think that they could be better accomplished in another way. Let us guard against criticising or even ignoring the orders of our superiors; let us combat all temptations to dissatisfaction and complaints by looking upon the labors of Jesus in the little home of Nazareth. Mary and Joseph, too, shall serve us as models, in their devotion to labor. While their hands were untiring in their lowly labors their thoughts uninterruptedly dwelt upon Jesus, Whom they contemplated, loved, and adored as their God in the semblance of humanity. Oh, blessed life of the Holy Family at Nazareth!

But as religious, are we not called to a similar happiness? We, too, live under the same roof with the Bridegroom of our souls. He enters our heart so frequently to enjoy intimate converse with us. We can at all times unite our work with His through pure intention, and like Mary and Joseph, live only for Him Who said: "As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me" (Matt. 25, 40). Oh, how should we thank God for having called us to such happiness!

Have I, heretofore, valued hidden and lowly labor at its true worth?

Affections: O Holy Family, what a sublime example Thou art for us in prayer and labor! O Jesus, Who didst not disdain to perform mean and lowly labors, hidden from the world, infuse into my heart love for such a

life. Give us grace to perform all our labors in closest union with Thee, that mindful of Thy presence, we may seek neither praise nor recognition from creatures. O Mary and Joseph, who wert united so intimately with Jesus by prayer and labor, and who found in the seclusion of Nazareth your sweetest delight, entreat for us and our entire congregation the grace to imitate your example, that each of our houses may be a faithful copy of the holy house of Nazareth.

Resolution: By means of frequent ejaculations, I will remain most intimately united with Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Spiritual Bouquet: Jesus, Mary, Joseph, bless us and grant us grace to conform our lives to the precepts of God and His Church.

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF ST. SEBASTIAN

January 20th

"I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice" (2 Tim. 4, 7-8).

First Prelude: Behold St. Sebastian, visiting the imprisoned to alleviate their sufferings and to confirm those wavering in the faith.

Second Prelude: O great saint, obtain for us the grace, in imitation of thy example, to alleviate the sufferings of our fellow-men and to glorify God in life and in death.

First Point

ST. SEBASTIAN, OUR MODEL IN THE EXERCISE OF CHARITY

Early in life, St. Sebastian had entered military service, where by reason of his valor and other excellent qualifications, a glorious career opened out before him. But in arms and wearing the military uniform, he also served the King of heaven and earth and esteemed his position only because it offered him an opportunity of gaining many souls to Christ. Thus we see the young hero, at the outbreak of the bloody persecution of the Christians, leaving his native city, Milan, generously tearing asunder all ties that bound him to the place of his birth, solely because the persecution raged less fiercely there, whereas in Rome it raged at its height. Having arrived in Rome, he was overwhelmed with marks of the emperor's favor and created captain of the pretorian guard. Sebastian utilized his influence only to spread Christianity in the imperial palace and to confirm his Christian brethren in the faith. Trembling for the constancy of the Christians, he procured admittance to the prisons whose gates were willingly opened wide to the emperor's favored one.

There we see the saint ignoring the danger to which he was exposing himself, exhorting the brothers, Mark and Marcellinus, who were in danger of being shaken in the faith by the tears of their parents, warding off from them the danger of apostasy, and reanimating their desire for martyrdom. God granted such persuasive force to the words of the Christian hero, that nearly all the imprisoned were converted to Christianity and requested baptism. St. Sebastian is a shining model for us. After

having severed all earthly bonds, so as to seek God's greater honor and to be able to do more for the salvation of souls, we must be ever ready in religious life, like valiant soldiers, to hasten whither greater sacrifices are in store for us. How often is there question in the service of charity of leaving a place grown dear to us, a fruitful field of labor, beloved companions and charges. What blessings will follow in the wake of such sacrifices of obedience, when they are made generously for the love of God! Let us, then, pay no heed to the repugnance of nature, but rather rejoice when an opportunity is afforded us, in imitation of St. Sebastian, to prefer the will of God to all else.

Second Point

ST. SEBASTIAN, OUR MODEL IN COURAGEOUS CONFESSION OF OUR FAITH AND ENDURANCE OF SUFFERINGS FOR CHRIST

Loaded with marks of the emperor's favor, St. Sebastian exercised such salutary influence in favor of Christianity at Rome, that the holy pope Cajus conferred upon him the title of "Defender of the Church." During the persecutions under Diocletian and Maximian in the Eternal City, he resembled a field marshal who encourages his legions to undaunted combat, but who boldly braves every danger himself, ever ready to sacrifice his life. Having sent countless martyrs to heaven, St. Sebastian himself finally achieved the crown of martyrdom, which he had so ardently desired. He was accused to the emperor of being a Christian, and when the latter refused to credit the accusation, Sebastian courageously and calmly, with a holy joy and animation, confessed himself a Christian, and with undaunted courage refuted the

charges of treason and ingratitude made by the emperor. Full of rage, Maximian condemned him to be put to death with the arrows of the African archers. With a holy enthusiasm, the Christian hero walked into the midst of his cruel executioners, to the tree at which he was to breathe out his soul, deeming himself happy, like his divine Master, to shed his blood on the wood. But God willed to reward the zeal of Sebastian by offering him opportunities for new sacrifices. Though he was believed dead, Sebastian revived again and boldly faced the tyrant, who then ordered him to be beaten to death with a cudgel.

Oh, how must the example of St. Sebasian shame us and incite us to new zeal! The life of a spouse of Christ should and must be a life of self-denial. The Lord demands martyrdom and a hero's death in the service of charity, whether through His dispensations it approaches us early in life or late; through a gradual consumption of our strength and vigor, or through an unexpected rapid dissolution. As love of Jesus was the motive of our surrender, so will love accomplish the sacrifice. Fidelity in little things, in the daily little sacrifices, alone, insures us fidelity in greater things.

Affections: O Jesus, King of heaven and earth, we thank Thee for all the graces Thou didst confer upon Thy holy martyr, St. Sebastian, and pray Thee, by his merits, to help us that we may strive to promote the salvation of our neighbor, exercise the works of charity with immolation of self, love the cross and ever more detach our hearts from earthly things. And thou, O great saint, illustrious martyr, defender of the Church of Christ, help us in the combat against her enemies and obtain for her peace. Protect the Holy Father and the Eternal City,

which encloses thy glorious tomb, and hold aloof the scourge of pest and contagious disease. Entreat for us, above all, here below peace of heart and in eternity, everlasting bliss.

Resolution: I will always hold myself in readiness for any sacrifice that may be demanded of me, were it even the sacrifice of my life.

Spiritual Bouquet: "I count all things as naught that I may gain Christ."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF ST. AGNES

January 21st

"O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory: for the memory thereof is immortal: because it is known both with God and with men" (Wis. 4, 1).

First Prelude: Picture St. Agnes courageously confessing her faith before the tribunal of the tyrant, and cheerfully immolating her life to her heavenly Bridegroom.

Second Prelude: Grant me, O Lord, through the intercession of St. Agnes, a great love of holy purity.

First Point

ST. AGNES GLORIFIED GOD BY HER VIRTUES, ESPECIALLY BY HER PURITY

From her tenderest youth, St. Agnes proved herself a true spouse and follower of her Lord and Saviour. Reared as she was, in the Christian religion by pious parents, her soul joyfully imbibed the divine truths, and the characteristic mark of the first Christians,—genuine

love,—distinguished Agnes in a particular manner. She, the daughter of noble and wealthy parents, inclined in loving mercy toward the poorest and the most miserable. St. Agnes is our model, above all, in love of innocence and purity. On the corrupt soil of degenerate ancient Rome, virginal souls bloomed in the infant Church, like spotless lilies. Enlightened by the Holy Ghost, the pure soul of Agnes had from earliest youth recognized the excellence of virginity, and she had pledged herself to her Divine Bridegroom by holy vows. Her maidenly charm and amiability attracted the eyes of the world, and induced the son of the Prefect to offer her his hand, which she repulsed vigorously, saying that she had consecrated her virginity to a heavenly Spouse, Who could not be beheld by mortal eyes, and that nothing could shake her determination to follow the Lamb as a spotless virgin.

How admirably beautiful are the words with which she extols the Divine Bridegroom of her soul, in the face of the pagan judge: "I love Christ, Whose bridal chamber I shall enter; whose Mother is a virgin, whose Father knows no woman, Whose blessed spirits greet me with exultation. I am espoused to Him Whom the angels serve, Whose beauty sun and moon admire." What words of burning ardor on the lips of a child of thirteen! It was the Holy Ghost Who ignited this flame of love in her, because He found no resistance to His grace in her pure heart. The purer a heart, the more capable it is of truly loving God and neighbor. We, too, have chosen for our Bridegroom Him Whom the angels serve: let us seek to grow in angelic purity and love, which adorned St. Agnes, that thereby we, too, may please Him and merit strength for the labors of our holy calling. Oh, that the Holy Ghost would find no resistance to His

grace in us; that He would be able to complete His work and transform us into true religious!

Second Point

ST. AGNES GLORIFIED GOD BY HER MARTYRDOM

Filled with anger and hatred at the refusal that he met with at the hands of St. Agnes, her persecutor delivered the holy virgin up to the judge, but neither threats nor promises of earthly glory could make her faith waver, nor shake her resolve to belong solely to her heavenly Bridegroom. The judge ordered her to be bound, and she cheerfully offered her hands to the executioners. When all arguments could not prevail with her, the judge finally pronounced the death-warrant, which Agnes received with heavenly joy and intense desire to be united with her Divine Bridegroom. She knelt and received the death blow that secured for her the double crown of virginity and of martyrdom. What was it that made the saint, the noble Roman maiden and rich heiress, so eager for martyrdom, though all the pleasures of life were at her command? It was the desire for heaven, for the possession of God. She had recognized with the eye of faith that all earthly riches are only dust and ashes in comparison with supernatural, heavenly goods. What was the value of all earthly beauty in the estimation of her who had immersed herself in the contemplation of the admirable heavenly beauty of her Bridegroom, before Whom the seraphim and cherubim adoringly fall prostrate? Thus she could say with the Apostle of the Gentiles: "I count all things to be but loss that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3, 8).

Are these my sentiments? Can I anticipate death with holy exultation? I should be able to do so, were I intent

upon detaching my heart from earthly things by the contemplation of heavenly treasures, of the beauty of the Divine Bridegroom, to Whom, like St. Agnes, I am espoused by my holy vows. Oh, when earthly affections draw me downward, I will ardently invoke St. Agnes, the glorious intercessor for virginal souls at the throne of the Lamb! With what confidence dare I rely upon her intercession, since even while on earth, she concerned herself with loving compassion in the miserable and needy! She will entreat for me the grace to overcome self and to adorn my soul, more and more, with the holy virtue of purity, that I may be made worthy one day to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

Affections: O Divine Bridegroom of virginal souls, I bless and praise Thee for the great and inestimable graces with which Thou didst endow Thy pure spouse, St. Anges, from her earliest years, and didst plant her as Thy pure, sacred lily in the garden of Thy Church, that her sweet fragrance might be diffused through all the centuries and imbue many souls with a love of purity and the desire to follow Thee. Oh, let my soul, wholly consecrated to Thee, my heavenly Bridegroom, grow in purity, that Thou mayest look upon me with complacence and vouchsafe me the happiness one day to praise and glorify Thee, in union with all Thy angels and saints, in the abode of the blessed for all eternity.

Resolution: I will faithfully follow the inspirations of grace and mortify my senses diligently that I may preserve chastity inviolate.

Spiritual Bouquet: "The empire of the world and all the grandeur of this earth I have despised for the love of God."

Prayer: Jesus, my Lord, my King . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

January 29th

"She reacheth therefore from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly" (Wis. 8, 1).

First Prelude: Picture St. Francis De Sales admonishing the erring with meekness and gentleness.

Second Prelude: O Divine Saviour, give me grace, in imitation of this amiable saint, to exercise mildness toward my neighbor, but at the same time to strive for the perfection of my holy state with the energy that distinguished our saint.

First Point

MEEKNESS OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

Enamored of the meekness of the Divine Heart of Jesus, St. Francis strove zealously to acquire this amiable virtue. He succeeded so well, that of him could be said as once of Moses: "He was the meekest of men" (Mos. 12, 3). Bossuet observes: "Meekness, is, so to say, the blossom of love, which having penetrated the interior, sheds over the exterior a simple, unadorned charm, manifesting itself in a spirit of cordiality." We see the confirmation of these words in the life of St. Francis. How placid and calm was his exterior; what benign cheerfulness beamed from his features, how charming and amiable were his conversations, how gracious was his whole demeanor! Meekness imparted to him that patience with which he bore with the faults of others,—that compassion, with which he felt all their sufferings,—that sympathetic readiness to help all, in as far as he was able.

The virtue of meekness was for St. Francis de Sales a prolific source of graces. It is the meek and placid soul that is ever splendidly disposed to pray well. A good prayer, however, is always pleasing to the Lord and receives a ready answer. Furthermore, there is hardly a virtue for the exercise of which there is so much opportunity as for meekness. It requires constant vigilance and mortification to crush at once every inclination opposed to the virtue. What a treasure of merit must the saint have acquired by the constant exercise of meekness! He himself said: "We must submit willingly to have our head pierced with the thorns of bitterness and our heart with the spear of contradictions; we must be ready to drink gall, and vinegar, if it please God, and withal, preserve a meekness that emanates from the heart and spreads a benign radiance over our countenance." Who does not recognize from these words that by the practice of meekness, St. Francis had attained consummate sanctity, in virtue of which, with the great Apostle of the Gentiles he could say: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2, 20)? Our saint had so faithfully copied the example of our Lord that on beholding him, people believed they saw a perfect image of Christ.

O Divine Bridegroom of my soul, give me grace to emulate Thy sacred image in my whole demeanor, by the practice of meekness, that I may glorify Thee and win souls to Thy love.

Second Point

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES COMBINED GREAT ENERGY AND DETERMINATION WITH MEEKNESS

The meekness of St. Francis de Sales is so admirable because it was by no means grounded in his natural dis-

position. On the contrary, he put forth great effort to cultivate it, but all the more glorious was the victory achieved with the grace of God. In the constant warfare in which he was engaged, he acquired great energy and determination, great power of will, so that nothing could induce him to deviate from the once recognized good. Convinced of his calling to the priestly state, even in early youth he knew no other aim than to become a priest according to the heart of God. But what difficulties had he to surmount in order to answer the divine call! Lamentations and tears, representations and petitions were employed to deter him from his heroic resolve, by which he immolated the brightest worldly prospects. But he heeded only the voice of God, which spoke to him as to Abraham of yore: "Go forth out of thy country and from thy kindred" (Mos. 12, 1).

In spite of the meekness, cheerfulness and mildness, which he manifested in intercourse with his own and with all who came in touch with him, St. Francis was a stranger to human respect, of which his conscience wholly disapproved. He never sought to please others, not even kings and princes of this earth, at the expense of God's interests. It was meekness, primarily, that rendered him fit to maintain such invincible firmness. A person so completely master of self as to be able to crush the slightest movements of impatience, resembles a well-ordered army in array, ever ready for battle and always issuing from it gloriously. By the power of his meekness and holy fortitude he brought thousands of heretics back into the true fold. He disarmed his persecutors through meekness; he requited contempt and insults with benefits; hatred, with love.

Would I so easily be brought to waver in my holy

resolutions, if I were complete master over myself, by the constant struggle against my evil inclinations?

Affections: O Divine Heart of my Saviour, source of meekness, I praise and bless Thee for having given St. Francis de Sales grace to emulate Thy meekness to such a degree that he won thousands of souls for Thy love and friendship. I offer Thee the rich merits of this holy bishop to atone for my defective good works. O my Jesus, through the intercession of this amiable saint, grant me grace to put on the spirit of meekness, of holy firmness and generous abandon of self, that by overcoming all obstacles opposed to my perfection, I may labor effectually to win souls to Thee.

Resolution: I will suffer no opportunity for the exercise of patience to pass by today unheeded.

Spiritual Bouquet: "She reacheth therefore from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly" (Wis. 8, 1).

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF ST. BRIGID *

February 1st

"I believe, O Lord; help thou my unbelief" (Mark 9, 23).

First Prelude: Picture St. Brigid exhorting her spiritual daughters to live by faith and to walk in its holy light.

Second Prelude: Grant me, O Lord, through the intercession of St. Brigid, the gift of strong practical faith.

*B. 453; d. 525. Erroneously written Bridget. St. Bridget was a princess of Sweden. (d. 1375)

First Point

GREAT DECISIONS

Little is certainly known of St. Brigid. In general it would seem that the smaller the subject, the bigger is the biography. Consider the Life of our Lord as told by the evangelists. Consider in lesser measure the lives of the saints and the sages, the poets and the philosophers of all time. All growth is in the dark or in secret. Holiness has nearly always been found within a hermitage.

In early girlhood Brigid answered the inner persuasive whisperings urging her to be a nun. Nearly all great decisions are by providential arangement made at times and under conditions which to the worldly-minded observer seem least fit for great decisions. The priest who in future years is to do the greatest work usually enters on the seminary discipline in his early teens. The same with suitable modifications may be said of the nun. Even those whose vocation is marriage commonly make that all important decision before full maturity of judgment has come, and especially they make it under conditions of sentiment most likely to disturb judgment. It seems to be God's way, and those who generously trust themselves to Him and act with pure motive never regret their decision. All such regrets come from another source than God.

Second Point

THE UNCOMPROMISING SPIRIT

Like all saints, Brigid's secret was an uncompromising spirit. That is the difference between the saint and the ordinarily good Christian. The saints took the words of Christ with literal seriousness; the rest of us try to make them "reasonable" and "practical": Francis Assisi and

"Go, sell all thou hast," and Francis Xavier and "What shall it profit a man"; Father Damien and "Because you did to the least of my children, you did to me." Multiply examples indefinitely. We, on the other hand, say, "Of course, we're to be reasonable and understand the words as our Lord intended."—"After all we are human beings, not angels." "After all we must live in the world as it is."—"After all we must not make religion ridiculous by extreme or exaggerated heroisms." Add many similar phrases of prudence, as it is usually called, though the proper family name is cowardice. Hence there are so many respectable Catholics but not many saintly convert-makers. Hence, many comfortable and comforting and popular religious, but not so many saints as might be. The saints took Our Lord seriously and never indulged in the spirit of compromise. There were no homeopaths among the saints seeking to heal themselves or the world by administering spiritual medicines in constantly increasing attenuation. Moreover there is no happiness among "reasonable" and compromising religious. One must belong earnestly to one party or the other; mugwumpery spells misery. A mad worldling can be happy through anaesthesia; a fervent religious is always happy through Divine grace; a monastic worldling has never been happy since the world began. By every rule, divine or human, the consecrated worldling is a failure and a fool.

Third Point

HOLINESS AND CULTURE

St. Brigid was a great patroness of learning. Spirituality of itself and even without learning brings with it a degree of refinement and culture, but study makes our lives sweeter, safer, steadier. Study enlarges our power

for both receiving and giving happiness, for doing good to others, for serving God and His Church. Study and talent made St. Brigid a great law-giver to other religious.

St. Brigid was a promoter of art. The convents founded by her and her spiritual daughters produced some of the most beautiful religious art of the world—illuminated missals and other pious books, and many objects for sanctuary use. These things never interfered with piety but rather promoted it. They always do with earnest and cultivated people, such as religious should always strive to be. Art properly used is an aid to sanctity, as Blessed Fra Angelico and countless others proved.

St. Brigid saw multitudes of spiritual daughters gathered into her convents to imitate her beautiful holy life. No religious order lacks postulants where the religious themselves are fervent. Virtue is even more contagious than vice. That is why biographies of great and holy men and women are such helpful reading. But the greatest tribute to the Mary of the Gael are the innumerable faithful Christian women living beautiful lives in the world who bear her name. No monument to the heroes of mankind is so impressive.

Affections: Holy St. Brigid who didst so sweetly and persuasively manifest to the cloister and to the world the virtues of refined and holy Christian womanhood, help us by thy prayers as well as by thy example. We would be like thee in earnestness and courage. Teach us to look for happiness where alone it can be found—in complete self-surrender to the ideals, the virtues, the refinements, the heroisms and the vows that are our heavenly solace here and are to be our everlasting crown hereafter.

Resolution: I will often recall the victories of faith, pray for more and more faith, live more and more by faith.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Have charity which is the bond of perfection" (Col. 3, 14).

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION OF MARY

February 2nd

"And after the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord" (Luke 2, 22).

First Prelude: Picture the Temple at Jerusalem, and the Blessed Virgin immolating her Divine Child to the heavenly Father, through the hands of the high priest.

Second Prelude: O holiest Virgin, obtain for me the grace to imitate the virtues of which thou gavest the example in this mystery.

First Point

VIRTUES WHICH THE BLESSED VIRGIN PRACTICED IN THIS MYSTERY

When we contemplate the Blessed Virgin in the act of offering her Divine Son on this day, we admire in a particular manner her love, her obedience and her profound humility. The law of purification, laid down by Moses at the command of God for all the Jewish mothers, could not have been binding on the purest, holiest of Virgins. Mary, however, esteemed obedience too highly to exempt herself from the perfect fulfillment of all the requirements of the law; hence her minute observance of it on this memorable day. In this mystery, Mary likewise set us a brilliant example of humility. She was the purest.

the holiest Virgin, to whom virginity was inexpressibly dear. To preserve it intact she was ready to sacrifice even the sublime dignity of Divine Maternity. She was willing, however, since it so pleased the Eternal Father, to appear as an ordinary mother in the eyes of the world.

Mary had before her the example of Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, Who did not refuse to submit to the law of circumcision, though by so doing He placed Himself among the ranks of sinners. Since the thrice holy God did not disdain to descend to such an abyss of humiliation and abasement, Mary would not stand back, but mindful of the sublime example set by her Divine Son she followed Him closely in the practice of humility. "Grace," says St. Augustine: "elevated her above the law, but humility subjected her to its precepts." Her humility was further shown when she redeemed her Divine Son with the offering of the poor. Humility and obedience were inseparable companions of the dear Mother of God, —they should be our mainstay and support on the way through religious life. They are the insignia of the true spouses of Christ, and through them we resemble Jesus and Mary most. Let us, then, resolve whole-heartedly to walk in the footsteps of our holy Mother, and often call to mind, what Mary would think, say, or do, if she were in our place.

Second Point

SENTIMENTS WITH WHICH THE BLESSED VIRGIN OFFERED HER DIVINE CHILD TO THE LORD

When Mary ascended the steps of the Temple bearing the Divine Child in her arms, she rejoiced in being vouchsafed the privilege of immolating to God a gift more precious in His sight than all the rest of the world. She

offered, in truth, the only gift worthy of the Divine Majesty,—a gift of infinite value, of which all other sacrifices witnessed in the Temple were mere shadows and types. Mary was privileged to immolate the Lord of the Temple in the Temple, and to offer to the Most High, God Himself under the semblance of humanity. This was, indeed, a marvelous, glorious prerogative, vouchsafed the Blessed Virgin on account of her great sanctity, which surpassed that of all other creatures. Let us unite ourselves with the sentiments of joy and gratitude that animated the heart of Mary. Let us deposit the oblation of our whole being into her maternal arms, that in union with her Divine Son, she may offer it to God, for at the hands of His holy Mother, our offering will be acceptable to Him.

The heart of the Blessed Virgin, was, moreover, not only swayed by joy, but pierced by the bitterest pain. She was fully aware of the prophecies, and knew that Jesus, the spotless Lamb, was to endure ignominy, sufferings and death for the sins of the world. All that she had read in the prophets had fully initiated her into the mystery of sufferings. Simeon holding the Saviour of the world in his arms, added the prophecy, "This Child is set for a sign, which shall be contradicted and thy own soul a sword shall pierce" (Luke 2, 34, 35). What profound grief must have pierced the heart of Mary at that moment! She took back the Divine Child from the hands of the high-priest, knowing that the bloody sacrifice had been ratified with God. She realized that one day it would be consummated on the Mount of the Crucifixion, and her maternal heart suffered in advance all the terrors of that day in their entire bitterness. Mary, however, did not refuse to accept such an excess of pain and sorrows.

Prompted by her magnanimous love and genüine unselfishness, she cheerfully immolated her Divine Son and herself to the heavenly Father. She adored the decrees of Divine Justice and submitted in all humility to be the handmaid of the Lord.

Do I accept the chalice of suffering, offered me at the hands of God, with Mary's sentiments? Does my heart like that of my holy Mother remain placid, unruffled, resigned and full of love in the trials that I must endure? O Heart of Mary, cheerful in immolation, obtain for me the grace to make generously the sacrifices that God requires of me.

Affections: O holiest Virgin, mirror of justice, in which we see reflected so beautifully the model for all elect, how far am I from resembling thee! Teach me daily to become more and more pleasing to thy Divine Son through faithful obedience and true humility of heart. Present me to the heavenly Father today, as an oblation for His honor and glory, and obtain for me the grace to purge this offering of all that might displease the eye of God. Support me when the sword of suffering will likewise pierce my heart, and through thy merits, let me be found worthy to be presented by thee to God, in the temple of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Resolution: We will generously and joyfully immolate whatever is opposed to the accomplishment of the Will of God in us.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Thy law, O God, is in the midst of my heart."

Prayer: Remember, O most gracious Virgin.

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF ST. MATTHIAS, APOSTLE

FEBRUARY 24TH

"I, therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech that you walk worthy of the vocation to which you are called" (Eph. 4, 1).

First Prelude: Picture the assembly of the Apostles and disciples, who are choosing another Apostle in the place of Judas.

Second Prelude: O Divine Saviour, give me grace to recognize the debt of gratitude I owe Thee for my religious vocation, and teach me how to correspond to this sublime calling.

FIRST POINT

THE ELECTION OF ST. MATTHIAS

Judas having proved traitor to his Lord and Master, the Apostles assembled in the Supper Hall, St. Peter presiding, to elect a new Apostle. What peace, what unity reigns in this assembly! There is no jealousy, no dispute about the first place,—all are animated by the desire to know and accomplish God's holy Will. Now Peter for the first time exercises the office of supreme Pastor, and acts as representative of Jesus Christ. It is, therefore, true, O God, that man can forsake and even betray Thee, in spite of having received distinguished graces from Thee! Peter now proposes to choose one from among the disciples, who would testify by his words to the doctrine of Jesus Christ. "Thereupon, they appointed two, Joseph, called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias" (Acts 1, 23). After this nomination, all turned to God in fervent prayer, to the En-

lightener of hearts, the Controller of fate, and prayed: "Thou, Lord, Who knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, To take the place of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas hath by transgression fallen, that he might go to his own place" (Acts 1, 24, 25). This last word must have impressed the disciples deeply; it is a frightful place into which Judas, the faithless Apostle, has plunged himself, and against which the holiest vocation is no safe-guard. It is, indeed, his own place, the place which he preferred to heaven, though heaven was open to him, if he but co-operated faithfully with the grace of his vocation.

How seriously must we ponder this truth, since we have been likewise called by Jesus to the state of perfection! Our vocation alone is not a guarantee of our salvation; only the faithful co-operation with the grace of election can save us. After the Apostles had invoked the divine assistance, they cast the lot, "And the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven Apostles" (Acts 1, 26). It is astonishing that Matthias was called by God to the apostolate and not Barsabas, who was surnamed the "Just." God, alone, knows the secrets of divine grace, because He, alone, searches the hearts. Therefore, He still calls to His service those who appear small and insignificant in the eyes of the world, for He has chosen "The foolish things of the world that He may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world that He may confound the strong" (1 Cor. 1, 27). We, too, have been preferred to thousands more just than ourselves, to be made the instruments of His love and mercy. Let us be on our guard lest through our fault His sacred designs be frustrated, and we forfeit the glorious crown.

Second Point

WE OUGHT TO ESTEEM OUR VOCATION HIGHLY AND DISCHARGE ITS DUTIES FAITHFULLY

As the call of St. Matthias to the apostolate was a distinguished grace, so is my vocation to the religious life an extraordinary grace, which I cannot sufficiently ponder that I may be moved to gratitude toward God, and to faithful co-operation with the graces imparted. To my soul, also, are addressed the words that God spoke to the Israelites: "The Lord hath chosen thee to be His peculiar people, and to make thee higher than all nations which He hath created" (5 Mos. 26, 18-19). These words are applicable to my holy vocation; it is a prerogative, because God has chosen me in preference to so many others who remained in the world, where they are exposed to countless spiritual dangers. It is, further, a proof of His great love, because He has received me into the ranks of elect souls. It is, finally, an unmerited advantage, placing me in a position in which all things tend to my happiness for time and for eternity, inciting me to good and deterring me from evil.

St. Matthias was faithful to his election and participated with apostolic zeal in all that befell his co-laborers in Jerusalem. With them he shared the labors and fatigues, as well as the sufferings, concomitant with the preaching of the gospel. Let us, also, correspond to the grace of vocation by accepting cheerfully our share of the labors enjoined upon us by obedience in the service of the souls entrusted to our care. Though it is not vouchsafed us, like St. Matthias, to shed our blood for Christ, religious life offers us opportunities to immolate ourselves to the Lord incessantly by unbloody martyrdom. Am I

frequently mindful that at my profession I bound myself to such a life of immolation?

Affections: O my Saviour, I thank Thee with all my heart that Thou hast chosen me in preference to so many others, far worthier of this grace, to serve Thee in the secure haven of religious life. With deep shame I must confess that I have not sufficiently esteemed this singular grace, and have so poorly corresponded to Thy designs. St. Matthias, who wast so happy as to achieve the crown that Judas had forfeited through his own fault, help us to persevere steadfastly on the way of the cross and mortification, that we may be found worthy, one day, to occupy the places of the fallen angels. Oh, that not one of us may lose the grace of election, through infidelity!

Resolution: We will frequently thank God for the grace of vocation, and observe conscientiously even the smallest precept of our Holy Rule.

Spiritual Bouquet: "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

March 7th

"Blessed are the clean of heart; for they shall see God" (Matt. 5, 8).

First Prelude: Picture St. Thomas being girt by angels' hands after having driven from his prison cell a sinful woman whom his soldier brothers had introduced

for the purpose of shaking the young novice's vocation to the Dominican Order.

Second Prelude: O God! Vouchsafe me the grace through prayer and watchfulness to keep my soul pure and undefiled so that I may not only please Thee but merit to see clearer every day the loving workings of Thy Providence.

First Point

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS THE ANGELIC STUDENT

If it is one of the noticeable facts about his family that it was ever distinguished for great military leaders, then, by his purity and learning, St. Thomas made ample amends for the misconduct and injustices of his forbears. As a mere child he was taken to the Benedictine Monastery of Monte Cassino, near his own ancestral castle of Rocca Secca, in order not only to be shielded from the worldly atmosphere of the court but also to be grounded in the rudiments of Christian knowledge. The holiness of the monks' lives, their silence, recollection, and studious habits, their punctilious performance of the liturgical offices of the Church, so fired the heart of the young student that he was eaten up with a desire to know the things of God. Hence his very first question was: "What is God?" And in proportion as the answer to it became fuller his love of purity grew. By prayer and study in the monastery he kept his mind clean while during his vacation seasons he frequented the Churches rather than worldly palaces and gay cities.

While praying in the Dominican Church at Naples he formed the determination of entering an Order whose

white habit was an unmistakable symbol and perpetual reminder of the purity of life and orthodoxy of teaching demanded of all its members. Because in entering the Order he was bidding farewell to the world, its pleasures and emoluments, his mother, the Countess Theodora, enlisted the interests of the Pope to dissuade him from his holy purpose. His two sisters, Theodora and Marietta, besieged him with tears and arguments to lay aside the white wool. His two brothers, Landolph and Raynal, went so far as to waylay him at Acquapendente and, carrying him off to a dark dungeon in his father's castle, introduced a sinful woman for the sole purpose of breaking his resolution. But Thomas snatched a burning faggot from the fire and drove her from his presence. With the charred wood he traced upon the wall the sign of our redemption and falling down upon his knees thanked God for his deliverance. Whereupon angels appeared, as he himself stated on his deathbed to his confessor, Father Reginald, with a linen cord with which they girt his loins, assuring him the while that he should never in all his life feel the promptings of his lower nature. In order to safeguard the brilliance of his purity, Thomas prayed and watched incessantly and embraced all kinds of penitential practices. Walking constantly in the sight of God he shunned, as far as possible, all converse with the world. As a consequence, he could confess truthfully when dying that through the grace of God and his own efforts he had succeeded in keeping himself undefiled.

Second Point

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS THE ANGELIC DOCTOR

In the Blessed Scriptures we read: "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God" (Matt. 5, 8). This refers, primarily, to the clearness with which the pure shall look upon the Godhead. But even in this present time the undefiled have a keen insight into the condescensions of God's love. Because their eyes are not blurred by sin and their vision not holden by carnal desires they see, even in the most secular things, loving dispositions of God's Providence. Just so, St. John, the Evangelist, while fishing one night saw, and instantly recognized, the Master standing upon the waters while the other Twelve took Him for an apparition. With unshakable assurance he immediately confessed: "It is the Lord" (John 21, 7). Just so all the imitators of St. John's purity can descry the nearness of the Master in the darkness of this earthly place. And abundant proofs of this truth can be found on every page of the great Saint's writings. In the mighty edifice of Catholic theology which his genius reared there is not a stone that does not seem to have been quarried in heaven. Not only does St. Thomas carry us to the very feet of God but he shows us how to discover some of the loving motives which brought Christ into this world for the redemption of a sinful race. While he uses the powers of reason to the fullest advantage, he does not disdain the light which comes to us through revelation and the Church's teachings. If no one has treated better of the supernatural, then we can understand why the Angelic Doctor

should have been the great bard of the "Mystery of Faith"—the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. So well did he write of the Holy Eucharist that he merited to hear from the Tabernacle: "Thou hast written well of me, Thomas! What reward wilt thou have for thy labors?" And quick as an arrow the answer came from the virginal Doctor: "None other than thyself, O Lord!" Thomas had dwelt so long upon the beauty of the Lord's Face that a glimpse of It would suffice him for all his labors.

Eaten up by an indescribable homesickness to be with God in the mansions of the blessed he passed away, a comparatively young man, but not without having left behind him works which have been acclaimed by learned men as the highest achievement of human reason and hailed by the Church as the best explanation and defense of her teaching. Not only has the Church made the study of his work obligatory on all priests, but Pope Leo XIII, on August 4, 1880, declared him the Patron of all schools, colleges and universities. And Pope Pius XI, on June 29, 1923, set him up as model of purity whom all the world should imitate. Thomas has instructed the Church of God by his learned works and has edified the family of Christ's redeemed by the purity of his life. He has clearly shown that a man can rise superior to himself by prayer and watchfulness and thus begin to enjoy in this present world something of that knowledge and bliss reserved for those who "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" singing a hymn such as it is given to none other to sing for "They are virgins" (Apoc. 14, 4).

Affections: O thou great Angel of the Schools, St. Thomas Aquinas, help me in the earthly struggle to keep myself undefiled of the world. By thy powerful inter-

cession before the throne of God assist me to trample upon my corrupt nature which solicits me so frequently and insistently to follow the lower roads. Let me understand that prayer and penance will keep my eyes clear so that they may begin even now to see something of the great love of my God. Help me to understand the wisdom of spurning both the world and my own evil nature so that, unsoiled, I may follow Him who is Purity Itself. I choose thee today as the model of my life, and beg thee in return for my great love for thee, to be the teacher of my mind and heart, so that following thee, the Angelic Master, now, I may be found worthy, one day, to join the angels themselves in praising God for all eternity.

Resolution: I choose St. Thomas Aquinas today as my special patron and promise to spread a knowledge of his angelic life among my friends, especially the young.

Spiritual Bouquet: I must show the modern world, even as St. Thomas showed his age, that my Catholic Faith can make me a hero by rising superior to my fallen nature.

Prayer: Take, O Lord.

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF ST. PATRICK

March 17th

"Thou hast girded me with strength unto battle: and hast subdued under me them that rose up against me" (Ps. 17, 40).

First Prelude: Picture St. Patrick going to face the

Ard Righ of Ireland at Tara, and pit the Cross' power against the strength of Druidism.

Second Prelude: Grant me, O Lord, the grace to grow in the knowledge and love of Thee, that I may be crowned by Thee in the victory that overcometh the world.

First Point

PREPARATION OF ST. PATRICK FOR HIS MISSION

The programme of Christ is to conquer the world for God through the preaching of the glad tidings of man's redemption unto His life of Truth. His commission to St. Peter and the Eleven has been carried on through the centuries by apostles, martyrs and confessors. Of these, since the days of St. Paul, perhaps no greater was sent out from the center of Christendom than St. Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland. He was prepared for his mission in the school of sufferings. At the age of sixteen he was allowed by God to be carried away from his home and remained for six years a slave in Ireland. There, as he watched the flocks of his master, he was, as he writes, severely chastened, being humbled by hunger and nakedness, and thus fitted, since he had no cares for himself, to care for the salvation of others. There, like another David, he grew in the spirit of prayer and mortification, learned the language of the people he was later to evangelize, and became master of the arts, usages and tenets of the Pagan religion which he was to overthrow. Warned in a vision to return to his native land, he was miraculously restored to freedom, and was cared for by God until, after many hardships, he reached his father's house. But the spirit of God soon urged him on. Like

the supernatural call of St. Paul to Europe, it was in a vision that St. Patrick heard the children of Ireland calling to him as with one voice: "We beseech thee, holy youth, to come hither and walk among us." He began then the second period of his life, the immediate preparation for his missionary career. For a time he studied and practiced perfection in the monastic school of his uncle, St. Martin of Tours, and later under St. Germanus of Auxerre in the famous school of Lerins, off the coast of France. By the direction of St. Germanus he determined at last to begin the conversion of Ireland. Accordingly, he set out for Rome, the center of Christian authority, and from Pope St. Celestine received his apostolic commission to convert the Irish.

Admire the providence and goodness of God in the lives of His friends, whom He has raised up for the spread of His kingdom among men. Pray earnestly for the grace of singleness of purpose, that our one desire may be the fulfillment of God's will as it is manifested to us in the will of our superiors.

Second Point

THE CONVERSION OF IRELAND

St. Patrick is the Abraham of the Irish, the father of his people in God. His work was complete. Journeying from Rome, he landed in Ulster, where for a time he preached with little success. Hearing that at Tara the chieftains of Ireland were to assemble with the Ard Righ to celebrate the feast of the lighting of the sacred fire, St. Patrick and his companions journeyed thither. On Good Friday night, according to Church discipline, they lit the Easter fire on a hill opposite Tara, and threw the

camp of the king into consternation, because, as the Druids prophesied: "This fire, O king, which has been lighted in defiance of thy royal edict, shall burn forever in this island unless it be this night extinguished and he who lit it shall rule thy subjects forever." St. Patrick was led before the king, but by God's power he confounded the Satanic might of the Druids, and preached the glory of the Saviour Who came to cast fire upon the earth. Before presenting himself to the assembly, St. Patrick composed and sang a beautiful hymn to the Blessed Trinity and to Christ, the Saviour, the Lord of heaven and earth, calling upon God and His angels to defend him from the power of Satan. Though Leary, the Ard Righ, was not converted, yet some of the lesser chieftains accepted the faith, as did also the king's daughter, and St. Patrick was granted permission to preach his doctrine in all Ireland. But this did not save the Apostle from continual opposition and from the jealous frenzy of the Druids. Yet St. Patrick's work was singularly successful. In his apostolic journeys throughout the island he had the blessed honor of consecrating three hundred and seventy bishops, ordaining three thousand priests, and erecting seven hundred churches and monasteries. Wherever he went he was followed by masons, carpenters and craftsmen of every sort who gave their lives to the material upbuilding of God's Church in Ireland. So enthusiastically did the people accept the faith that the whole island was turned into a monastic church, whole tribes in some instances becoming religious orders, and, at the death of the Apostle, no idol in Ireland was unturned. The work of St. Patrick was enduring.

Like a Moses, he not only laid the gentle yoke of Christian law upon the people, not only enriched them

with the Sacred Books and the catechism in their own language, but made a Christian digest of their national laws, the Senchus Mor. The work of St. Patrick was inspiring. Like an Elias he breathed into the people the splendid hope of Christ's second coming, so that his children have ever walked in the air of the supernatural; he prayed and was promised by God that their faith would fail not, and no heresy should arise in Ireland, and he fought with God for his people till he received from Him the promise that for their sake the island would be buried in the sea a week before the last days of Antichrist. St. Patrick is a world hero and a world force, and his feast is celebrated each year in every country of the globe.

Affections: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom He hath chosen for His inheritance" (Ps. 31, 1). "Turn again, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and see, and visit this Thy vineyard; and perfect the same which Thy right hand hath planted" (Ps. 79, 15). "Give glory to the Lord, and call upon His name: declare His deeds among the Gentiles" (Ps. 104, 1).

Resolution: I will offer up all my good works for the Poor Souls, that through their intercession the kingdom of God may advance.

Spiritual Bouquet: God help us!

Prayer: Hymn to St. Patrick.

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH

March 19th

"Joseph, her husband, being a just man" (Matt. 1, 19).

First Prelude: Picture St. Joseph laboring in the little dwelling at Nazareth, and finding his joy and happiness in prayer and in intimate intercourse with Jesus and Mary.

Second Prelude: St. Joseph, foster-father of my Saviour, beg for me the grace to lead a life of faith and to live and die in union with Jesus and Mary.

First Point

THE PERFECT LIFE OF ST. JOSEPH

The election of St. Joseph to the exalted office of foster-father of Jesus and guardian of the virginity of Mary gives us to understand how virtuous, how rich in grace and sanctity his soul must have been. Holy Scripture styles him "just"; this characterization includes the sum total of all virtues. The just man liveth by faith; therefore the living faith of St. Joseph shines forth above all else. He believes in the divinity of the Babe that comes to this earth in poverty and indigence. He believes, in spite of the darkness that surrounds him, and this steadfastness of faith merits for him the unveiling of the mysteries of the Most High, Who sent him an angel as messenger. This living faith was the source of his unshaken confidence in the midst of trials, and of the ardent love which he cherished for the Child Jesus. It qualified him to bear fatigues and tribulations joyfully for

the Divine Child, and to be to Him a loving father and protector. While he watched over and cared for the Child, he adored Him as his Lord and God; hence his spiritual vision and profound recollection, in virtue of which he enjoyed in loving intercourse with Jesus and Mary, a foretaste of the delights of future heavenly bliss. His look was constantly directed to Jesus and Mary, and his life regulated according to their example. He lived and labored for them and sanctified all his thoughts, words and actions with the intention of serving God and pleasing Him only.

The life of every Christian, like that of St. Joseph, is consecrated to the special service of God. We must, therefore, live a life of faith. "Faith," says St. Augustine, "is the eye of our soul." This eye penetrates the clouds that envelop the divine mysteries and permits us to contemplate our Lord and God in His infinite perfections. Faith likewise enkindles the flame of divine love in our hearts and gives us a foretaste here on earth of the eternal joys of heaven. O St. Joseph, beg for us a living faith and ardent love, and teach us to live in intimate union with Jesus and Mary, that all our thoughts, words and actions may be a pleasing oblation to God.

Second Point

THE PRECIOUS DEATH OF ST. JOSEPH

The life of St. Joseph, hidden before the world, but precious in the sight of God, closed in a fitting and worthy manner. St. Joseph died in the arms of Him Whom he could call Son, but Who was at the same time his Lord and God. At his side was the Virgin of virgins, his chaste Spouse, whom the eternal Father had entrusted to his pro-

tection. With Jesus and Mary he had lived in the closest union, and now in death he enjoyed their powerful and consoling assistance. What happiness, what a grace to die such a death!

The precious death of St. Joseph induced Holy Church to choose him as the patron of the dying, and experience teaches that he proves a powerful protector in the last hard struggle. We, also, will earnestly plead with him for the grace of graces,—a happy death. The more we try to imitate his poor, hidden, silent and humble life, the more readily will he intercede in our behalf for this grace. As one lives so one dies. As Christians we have the duty to live in closest union with God and for God alone. At times, we may find it difficult to do this, but let the beauty of the fervent Christians' death strengthen us. To them we can apply the words of Holy Scripture: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Ps. 115, 15). In imitation of St. Joseph, their model, they labored for God by fervent communion with Him in prayer, and will now be united with Him in everlasting happiness.

St. Joseph, obtain for us the grace that our death may be like to thine!

Affections: O glorious St. Joseph, foster-father of my Lord and Saviour, who wast worthy to be so highly exalted by God, with Holy Church I congratulate thee on thy blessed election. By thy love for Jesus and Mary, help me faithfully to follow the inspirations of grace, and to sanctify all my actions by a pure intention. May my eyes, as were thine, be constantly directed to Jesus and Mary, that here on earth their company may be my sweetest delight and in heaven my eternal reward. Remember, O St. Joseph, that daily we call on thee for

ourselves and for those who are in their death agony: Jesus, Mary, Joseph, assist us in our last agony!

Resolution: In imitation of the example of St. Joseph, we will faithfully follow the inspirations of divine grace.

Spiritual Bouquet: "St. Joseph, master of the spiritual life, pray for us!"

Prayer of the Church: Illustrious St. Joseph, I implore thee, by the fatherly heart which God deigned to give thee for His Son, and by the filial love that Jesus bore to thee, may the sanctification of my soul be especially recommended to thee. Be thou my guide and model in the interior life, that after having followed thy footsteps here on earth, I may be made worthy to enjoy the bliss of the elect in heaven, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF ST. BENEDICT

March 21st

"Seek first the kingdom of God, and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 7, 33).

First Prelude: Represent St. Benedict in his grotto of Subiaco after he had abandoned all worldly attractions, for the purpose of saving his soul.

Second Prelude: O God, grant me the grace to serve and love Thee, and to understand that I cannot be happy without Thee.

First Point

PREPARATION OF ST. BENEDICT FOR HIS MISSION IN LIFE

God had destined St. Benedict to be a wonder of holiness and the Patriarch of a great monastic family. Like Abraham, he had first to abandon his home and all things earthly, and to hide himself in a wilderness, where God alone would be the witness of his heroic virtues. He left Rome where he was surrounded with all the luxuries that wealth could procure. His home will be a lonely grotto; the rocks his resting place; a haircloth his garment; wild animals his companions. His only desire is to die to himself and to all things earthly. God repays the sacrifices which His servant has made a hundredfold, even in this life. God grants him in exchange a truly supernatural life, and sustains his bodily health, which under the stress of severe penances would have failed. St. Benedict acquires a science far more precious than the most renowned universities could have furnished; God makes him a teacher of innumerable disciples. That is what St. Benedict acquired by dying to himself! What prevents us from imitating him? Generally the foolish thought that we must give too much before God grants us the happy state of holiness; we are afraid of an exchange which must turn to our advantage; death to ourselves produces true life.

Second Point

ST. BENEDICT A SUITABLE INSTRUMENT IN THE HANDS OF PROVIDENCE

St. Benedict, by hiding himself in the spirit of self-effacement, places himself in the impossibility of under-

taking anything by himself, and God chooses him as executor of His glorious designs. He leaves the world, and the patricians of Rome seek him; he renounces wealth, and the rich open their treasures to him. After the example of the Apostles, he receives with the one hand and gives with the other and always remains poor himself. St. Gregory tells us that he was filled with the spirit of all the just. When compelled to leave his grotto he becomes a teacher, a legislator, and a spiritual guide without having read any other law than that of the gospel. He had forsaken honor and power to which his noble birth entitled him; in exchange God gives him power over the creatures. The elements and the devil obey him; at his command the dead rise from their graves; Totila, the scourge of God, is struck with fear in the presence of the humble monk; God calls him to be the founder of a religious Order, which has rendered eminent services to Church and State. He succeeds because he wishes to die to himself and to live only for Christ. Appreciate your happiness in having abandoned all for Christ, and to obtain the reward promised continue to be true to your vow of detachment from the world. To be a useful instrument in the hands of Providence you should begin by dying to self and by despising the world and its attractions.

Affections: Fill us, O Lord, with the spirit with which St. Benedict served Thee, that we may endeavor to love what he loved and to do what he taught.

Resolution: I will give proofs today of my detachment from the world and its maxims.

Spiritual Bouquet: My God and my All!

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION

March 25th

"Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word" (Luke 1, 38).

First Prelude: Picture the Blessed Virgin Mary in her chamber at Nazareth, flooded with heavenly light, and the angel announcing to her the heavenly message.

Second Prelude: O Mary, who didst prize virginity so highly as to prefer it to the dignity of Divine Maternity, obtain for me a similar love of holy purity and the grace to imitate thy cheerfulness in sacrifice.

First Point

THE CONDUCT OF MARY IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ANGEL

The mystery of the Annunciation is the aurora, as it were, of that effulgent day which through the birth of the Saviour should illumine the whole world. Behold Mary, wrapt in devotion, praying in her chamber. What may have been the import of her prayer? "Drop down dew, from above, and let the clouds rain the just:" (Is. 45, 8), Mary fervently prayed with all the just of the Old Law. She knew that the fulness of time had been accomplished when the Redeemer was to come. How she rejoiced to be living at this time! How she longed to look upon the Anointed of the Lord, who would redeem mankind from the curse of sin! Mary knew that He should proceed from her people, and she hoped to be permitted to behold His countenance, and to be the humble handmaid of His

holy Mother. While Mary prayed thus, fervently, a bright light flooded her room. An angel of the Lord, radiant with heavenly splendor, stood before her and saluted her reverently with the words: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee!" (Luke 1, 28). And when she, the humblest of virgins, who deemed herself the last among her people, was frightened and wondered at the words of the angel, Gabriel unfolded to her the designs of the Most High. Mary's prayers had ascended to the throne of God. Her devout longing for the advent of the Messiah determined the Almighty not longer to delay the moment of His coming. The eye of God rested with complacence upon the pure, humble Virgin, "full of grace."—O Mary, manifest thy will; behold heaven and earth are awaiting thy word in silent awe. But Mary still hesitates. How can she give her consent, having vowed perpetual virginity to the Lord? But the angel calms her. By a stupendous miracle of Divine Omnipotence consummate virginity would in Mary be joined with the most sublime motherhood. From Mary's lips comes the humble word: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word" (Luke 1, 38). And heaven and earth met in sweet embrace.

"The Word was made flesh." Truly, in that moment the "Lord was with her." The Eternal Father was with her, by virtue of her inexpressible prerogative of being the Mother of His only begotten Son. The Eternal Word was with her, flooding her soul with graces. The Holy Ghost was with her, elevating her to a dignity which evoked the wonder and admiration of all the angels. With them we will praise and extol Mary and thank her with our whole heart that through her our salvation was secured. Let us pray our Mother and Queen to implore

for us better knowledge of the dignity of virginity, and the grace to preserve the lustre of chastity and purity of soul untarnished, in its fullest splendor and beauty.

Second Point

THE SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE WHICH MARY MANIFESTED IN THIS MYSTERY

The desire of the daughters of Israel was directed solely to the honor and exalted distinction of being the Mother of the Messiah. But Mary was ready to relinquish this honor in favor of her vow of virginity made to God, in virtue of which she consecrated herself irrevocably to His service, with body and soul, to be wholly His. She judged rightly that, according to the Fathers of the Church, grace which makes us holy and pleasing to God, is of such infinite value as to take precedence before every other distinction. But how great must have been her spirit of self-immolation to formulate such a resolve! Mary, enlightened in a degree superior to the intelligence of the angels, knew the prize that she was determined to relinquish. O Queen of Virgins, how shall we worthily extol thee! Henceforth, countless souls, in imitation of thy sublime example, will gather under the standard of virginity to be the spouses of the Son of God, and to crucify the flesh with its lusts.

Mary, however, stood in need of heroism to make the sacrifice that was demanded of her not only that she might forfeit the dignity of motherhood, but that she might accept it. From the prophets, she was conversant with the life of the Messiah and the sufferings that inevitably awaited Him; and as His Mother, she was to share these sufferings with her beloved Son. Nevertheless, with the words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done

to me according to thy word," she accepted generously the full measure of pain and sorrow that the omnipotent and all-merciful God had decreed for her as co-redemptrix of the human race. Let us learn from Mary joyously to make the sacrifices ordinarily found in the faithful imitation of Jesus, and voluntarily to inflict acts of mortification on our sinful nature, by performing self-imposed penances for our many sins and short-comings. Wherever Jesus appears, He comes laden with the cross, which is the only key to heaven.

Affections: O Mary, exalted Queen of Virgins, I thank thee with all my heart for the love thou didst bestow on mankind by consenting to be the Mother of God. Entreat for me and all my companions in religion the love of holy virginity that filled thy heart. Obtain for us, likewise, the spirit of sacrifice that animated thee when thou gavest thy consent to become the Mother of the Redeemer, even though it meant to enter upon the path of life-long sufferings as Mother of Sorrows; help us never to shirk any hardship or trial required for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. In imitation of thy sublime example we will refuse God nothing that He asks of us, and with sentiments of whole-hearted, loving abandonment to the Will of God and utter denial of self, we will ever say: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word."

Resolution: I will refuse God no sacrifice today and deny myself in those things, particularly, which are contrary to nature.

Spiritual Bouquet: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word.

Prayer: Remember, O most gracious Virgin . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE SOLEMNITY OF ST. JOSEPH, PATRON OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

WEDNESDAY BEFORE THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

"He made him master of his house, and ruler of all his possession" (Ps. 104, 21).

First Prelude: Picture St. Joseph in heavenly glory, receiving the petitions of all who pray to him.

Second Prelude: O illustrious saint, patron of Holy Church and my protector, entreat for me grace to strive for the perfection of my state with fervor and perseverance.

First Point

ST. JOSEPH, THE PROTECTOR OF HOLY CHURCH AND OF CHRISTENDOM

To add a new lustre to the cult of St. Joseph, Holy Church instituted this festival in his honor. She solemnly declared St. Joseph patron of the Catholic Church, and strongly urges her children to have recourse to him in all necessities. St. Joseph was appointed, by God Himself, to be head of the Holy Family, to protect and guide Him Who was to found the great family of God—Holy Church. As St. Joseph was entrusted with the care of the human body of the Saviour, so according to the divine plan he was to assume the custody of the mystical body of Christ, Holy Church. God provided him with love and devotion for this sublime office. Jesus in heaven will surely endow with boundless power His humble foster-father, who offered himself in self-sacrificing love for His welfare on earth, and who earned patiently, in the sweat

of his brow, the daily bread that gave sustenance to the Divine Child, and provided for all His wants with tenderest care. If the influence of St. Joseph with God is exceedingly great, his readiness to exercise it in our behalf is none the less great. Oh! how good must he be who so often cradled the Incarnate Word in his loving arms and pressed Him to his paternal bosom! What profusion of love must have flowed from the heart of the Divine Child into that of Joseph!

Countless souls have experienced the marvelous fervor and fidelity of the intercession of St. Joseph. St. Teresa, one of his most devoted clients, assures us that she has never called on him in vain. She observes that in heaven Jesus delights to do the Will of Him to whom He chose to be subject on earth. Let us, then, go to Joseph, whom God has placed lord over His house, and whose heart He has enriched with love and compassion. Let us anew commend to his benign protection Holy Church, Christian families and, in particular, our relatives and those entrusted to our care. Let us teach them by word and example, in all trials and needs to obey the injunction of Holy Church: "Go to Joseph!"

Second Point

ST. JOSEPH IS THE MODEL AND PROTECTOR OF RELIGIOUS

St. Joseph is pre-eminently the model and patron of religious. He was vouchsafed the grace to be the head of the Holy Family, and in union with Jesus and Mary, to lead a life of perfect obedience, marvelous chastity and extreme poverty. He obeyed, humbly silent, without reservations or hesitancy, proving his will to be in perfect

accord with the holy Will of God who desires us to shape our lives in accordance with His divine plans. St. Joseph ardently loved chastity and practiced it in so eminent a degree that God elected him to be the spouse and guardian of the Immaculate Virgin, and that the Sun of Justice, the Splendor of the thrice holy God, willed to live thirty years in his company. The life of Joseph was, further, full of privations, the ordinary consequences of poverty, which he felt the more keenly because his divine Foster-Son and his virgin Spouse had to share them with him. Again the life of St. Joseph was an uninterrupted prayer, a constant communing with God, a continual contemplation of the divine mysteries of the Holy Childhood of our Redeemer. He lived only for Jesus and Mary, and had but one aim,—the faithful emulation of these perfect models of consummate sanctity. What a sublime example for us!

Great St. Joseph, imbue us ever more with a profound knowledge of the interior life, that we may cherish and foster it in our hearts and in the hearts of our charges, and be our protector in the dangers that threaten us in these evil times. By propagating its false maxims the world seeks to undermine obedience, and shake the very foundation of poverty; and by luring us into useless intercourse with creatures, this same deceitful world would divide and secularize our hearts. How much we stand in need of higher protection! And inasmuch as we are called to care for Jesus in the person of the poor, to protect Him in the children whom it is our mission to instruct, St. Joseph will accord this protection to us more readily.

Great St. Joseph, protect us and our charges in every danger of body and soul!

Affections: Glorious St. Joseph, illustrious patron of

Holy Church, benign father and custodian of religious, look down on this, thy day of honor, upon the members of our Congregation who deem themselves happy under thy fatherly care. We offer thee our renewed heartfelt sentiments of veneration, love, confidence and gratitude, and consecrate to thee anew and commend to thy paternal solicitude all our intentions and needs. Confiding in the unbounded power which is thine in heaven, we pray thee, great patron of the interior life, to be especially solicitous for the salvation of our souls. Replenish us before all with holy love, which thou didst draw copiously from the Heart of thy dear Foster-Son. Help us to be faithful spouses of Jesus and devout servants of Mary, that all who have enjoyed the protection of the Holy Family on earth, may rejoice in their blessed company throughout eternity.

Resolution: To render myself deserving of the special patronage of St. Joseph, I will strive zealously to lead an interior life.

Spiritual Bouquet: St. Joseph, foster-father of our Lord Jesus Christ and true spouse of Mary ever virgin, pray for us.

Prayer: Guardian of virgins and father, holy Joseph, to whose faithful care Christ, Jesus, innocence itself, and Mary, Virgin of virgins, were committed: I pray and beg of thee, by these dear pledges, Jesus and Mary, free me from all uncleanness, and make me with spotless mind, pure heart, and chaste body, ever most chastely to serve Jesus and Mary, all the days of my life. Amen. (Indulgence of 100 days, once a day.)

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

APRIL 30TH

"Be instant in prayer; watching in it with thanksgiving: Praying withal for us also, that God may open unto us a door of speech to speak the mystery of Christ" (Col. iv, 2, 3).

First Prelude: Picture St. Catherine with radiant face uplifted, holding her fiery heart in her outstretched hand, fit offering to Jesus the Bridegroom. In due course she receives from Jesus the ring of eternal espousals.

Second Prelude: "O Holy Spirit, eternal God! Christ-love, enter my heart. Preserve me from evil thoughts. Make every pain seem light. Aid me in all I do." (From one of St. Catherine's prayers.)

FIRST POINT

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA, THE WOMAN OF GOD

A popular woman to whom thousands flocked for comfort was the lowly dyer's daughter, the Dominican religious, St. Catherine of Siena. On passing into the twenties, the age of her religious training, she spent three years without speaking to anyone except to God and to her confessor. It was Jesus Himself who in this way taught her the secret of peace and soul-power. "Build a private cell in your heart," was His instruction. "Vault it with Divine Providence. Live retired therein and no storm will ever disturb you."

Silence is God's music. Power is the echo. Sanctifying grace is the cause of its vibrations. Beauty is one of its lasting effects. St. Catherine's heart was a home of fervent prayer. Her presence attracted as no home on

earth can ever do. It was a ray of heaven's light that drew the multitudes, subdued souls, softened hearts, caused dignity to stoop and demons to flee. It conquered men in every station. It impelled them to kneel and strike their breasts.

Such noble and Godward attractiveness won the positive approval of the Holy See. It led Pope Gregory XI to appoint three Dominican Fathers, one of whom was Blessed Raymond of Capua, to keep in readiness for hearing confessions at Siena, for all whom the Saint induced to break with evil ways. The Fathers were kept busy night and day by penitents, many of whom had never confessed before.

St. Catherine's spirit was a man-ruling spirit. The confraternity of St. Catherine at Siena is composed of men and boys. The sportsmen of the city visit her chapel to implore a blessing on the races. The victors return to leave their heraldic emblems at the shrine as ex votos. Certain beautiful portraits of the saint owe the reverence of their touch to Catherine's personal influence on the artist. Vanni was introduced. Catherine converted him. Then Vanni produced the portraits that still survive.

When St. Catherine was yet among the living, physicians envied her influence over sufferers. A body of Italian doctors once assembled to put her to shame by challenging her knowledge directly; but the conference led only to their utter confusion. Three ecclesiastical dignitaries had enacted a similar procedure previously at Avignon. The subject-matter of their investigation was chiefly the interior life; but their aim was to discredit Catherine before the Pope. The heavenly enlightenment and humility of the saint compelled them to do the very reverse.

SECOND POINT

SAINT CATHERINE, PATRON OF THE ROMAN CHURCH, TOGETHER WITH SAINTS PETER AND PAUL

It was Pope Pius IX who honored St. Catherine with this title. The little girl who loved flowers, who used a stone for her pillow, who carried a lantern to church and on her errands to the afflicted—the nurse of spiritual hygiene, who sucked the cancer-sores of patients and knew few antiseptics apart from the Hail Marys which she was accustomed to say going up and down stairs—the professed religious, after having passed into glory, was crowned officially with holy rank, and today through papal approval has her name associated with the names of Saints Peter and Paul.

In her youth St. Catherine cut her hair short because she abhorred vanity. She declined marriage. She chose drudgery instead; for the drudgery, though imposed by persecution, safeguarded the vow of virginity that she took in early childhood.

St. Catherine never separated the love of Mary from that of Jesus. Her correspondence was always in letters of fire. Every letter she wrote was inscribed: In the name of Jesus crucified and sweet Mary: Mary for Catherine was an inexhaustible treasure-house always near and habitually invoked as "The Temple of the Trinity, the focus of love divine, a chariot of fire, a tranquil sea and source of peace," who had literally "saved the human race."

When Jesus offered St. Catherine a choice of crowns, she chose thorns in preference to gold. Jesus called her His "sister," His "friend," His "dove." He marked her body with the piercings of His five wounds. He gave His heart to her. Catherine was His spouse. Catherine's love for Mary was but another outlet for the indwelling affections of Jesus toward His holy Mother.

For seventy years the popes had remained away from Rome, the capital of the Church. It was Catherine who brought them back. Her charity extended to every department of national and ecclesiastical government. It was affected by every inmost palpitation in the mystic body of Christ. Her piety was comprehensive. Her heart, her life, her mission emphasized constantly the unity of the Christ-love in her soul. No wonder she died praying for Christ's vicar. Her last words were these: "O my God, remember the Church and its supreme head."

Affections: Dear Jesus, Thou who didst come to scatter fire on earth and didst raise up St. Catherine to be a brilliant and consuming flame, enkindle in our hearts that boundless gratitude for thy loving Providence which led Catherine to exclaim: "O what shall I say? I shall act like a stunned beggar and cry ah! ah! I know not how to say anything else. Words with a sound can never give out what I feel in my soul. My craving is infinite for Thee alone.

"It seems I could repeat the words of St. Paul: 'No tongue can say, no ear can hear, no eye can see, no heart can think what I have seen.' And what hast thou seen? The mysteries of God. Yes, what shall I say? All grossness, begone! O my soul, let us say only that thou hast tasted and seen the Abyss of Providence worshipful and eternal."

Resolution: I shall spare no effort to keep my heart as a furnace burning with vigorous holy desires. I shall watch and pray lest, by the neglect of interior graces, I shall extinguish the Spirit of God within me. (I Thess. v, 19.)

Spiritual Bouquet: They who are Christ's own, seek not their own glory, but that of Christ's Father and ours.

Prayer: Take, O lord, . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF SS. PHILIP AND JAMES

MAY 1ST

"On the following day, He would go forth into Galilee, and He findeth Philip. And Jesus saith to him: 'Follow Me'" (John 1, 43).

First Prelude: Picture our Divine Saviour calling Philip and James to follow Him.

Second Prelude: Ye holy Apostles, who wert distinguished by your fidelity and love of your Divine Master, and by great zeal for souls obtain for me the grace to imitate your example.

FIRST POINT

ZEAL OF ST. PHILIP TO GROW IN THE KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE OF GOD

After calling Andrew, John, and Simon Peter, our Divine Saviour passed through Galilee, and came upon Philip, whom He also invited to follow Him. True to the divine call, "Follow Me," Philip left all his possessions, his family and wonted occupation, to unite himself most intimately to Jesus. Even before his vocation to the apostolate, he had, according to St. John Chrysostom, made the prophets and the law objects of his devout contemplation, and his desire for greater knowledge grew proportionately as he attached himself more closely to his Divine Master. We know that at the Last Supper, when Jesus promised His disciples a clearer knowledge of His Father, Philip cried out: "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us" (John 14, 8). He de-

sired to know naught else than God; earthly things had no value for him. Let us admire St. Philip's zeal for souls. Hardly had he found Jesus, when, permeated by the firm faith that Jesus is the Messiah announced by Moses and the prophets, he felt himself constrained to lead others to Him. In order to awaken in the soul of Nathaniel the desire for the Saviour, he imparted the good tidings to him. And to dispel Nathaniel's doubt when the latter wondered: "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Philip answered: "Come and see" (John 1, 46). He is convinced that Nathaniel is unable to resist the divine power of Jesus. How confidential must even, then, Philip's intercourse with his Master have been!

Let us learn from this great Apostle to devote ourselves unreservedly to the imitation of Christ, to stake all in order to grow in knowledge and intimate love of Him, that we may become useful instruments in the hand of God for the spread of the faith. God alone suffices, Who alone can fill the void in the human heart. Let us, then, beg Him to make ours wholly His own, and to imbue it with that perfection of love which is ever bent on gaining souls for Him by whole-hearted retrenchment of even legitimate pleasure, by renunciation of self-will, and resolute denial of self.

Second Point

THE VIRTUES OF ST. JAMES

Holy Church directs our attention to St. James, who, likewise, followed the Master with unreserved fidelity and devotion. He accompanied Him on His apostolic journeys through Judea and was witness of His miracles as well as His glorious ascension. Such was the venera-

tion in which St. James, as bishop of Jerusalem, was held even by the Jews, on account of his spotless purity, his spirit of mortification and zeal in prayer, that he was styled the "Just," and crowds pressed around him to kiss the hem of his garment. Thus he was a shining light in the community in which he lived, and he succeeded, by virtue of his example and love of souls, in winning many for the faith in Christ. Finally, his holy life was crowned by martyrdom. He offered his life's blood joyously for his Divine Master, Who for love of him had died on the wood of shame, and in order to resemble Christ in all things unto the last, he died, praying for his enemies.

Religious devoted to the care of the sick, or to the education of youth, should be lights in their respective spheres in which they are placed by their superiors. By the force of their example of piety and fervor they should draw the souls entrusted to them closer to God, render the practices of devotion lovable and agreeable to them, and like St. James reinforce example by fervent petitions for the salvation of souls. Seeing the sweet attraction of the patience and meekness, the willingness to offer help and alleviation to others, the humble courage by which fervent religious suffer no ingratitude or hardships to ruffle their spirit, or deter them from discharging every duty faithfully, their charges will feel themselves irresistibly drawn to imitate their virtuous lives, and thus to become more and more God's own. We should learn from St. James to persevere in our God-given vocation to our dying breath, and not to be deterred from aspiring unremittingly after the perfection of our holy state, that we may be made worthy to receive the reward of the heroic souls who have given their lives for their dear Lord and Saviour.

Affections: O glorious Apostles, Saints Philip and James, I offer you my felicitations in union with Mother Church to the lofty distinction accorded you by virtue of the call to the apostolate, as well as your fidelity in cooperating with the grace of vocation. Assist me by your powerful intercession, that I may faithfully follow Christ in the observance of my holy vows, be the way smooth and pleasant or strewn with thorns and rugged, and constantly strive for the perfection of my holy state. Obtain for us all the grace of perseverance in our holy calling that like you we may be made worthy to glorify God in life as well as in death.

Resolution: I will endeavor, by prayer and good example, to help others to the knowledge of Christ.

Spiritual Bouquet: "I desire but to know Christ, and Him crucified."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF THE FINDING OF THE CROSS

May 3d

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. 6, 14).

First Prelude: In spirit witness the joy of St. Helena on finding the cross of our Saviour.

Second Prelude: Grant me the grace, O Jesus, at all times to venerate Thy holy cross with tender love, and daily to become more attached to it.

First Point

THE CROSS IS OUR PORTION HERE BELOW

How happy was St. Helena when, after a long and assiduous search, she found the cross of the Lord, and confirmed its genuineness by the cure of a sick person and the raising to life of another. Now this instrument of our redemption has become an object of the veneration of the faithful to the end of time. It is divided into countless small particles and there is no part of the Christian world not in possession of one of these precious treasures. As our Divine Saviour has left the cross as a memorial to His Spouse, the Church, so He wills, likewise, to let all His children share in the sufferings endured on the cross. He permits each one to find the cross that His love has apportioned to his strength. Some have to bear the cross of bodily pain; others are visited by interior trials, temptations, and doubts, darkness and aridity; others, again, the Lord tries by humiliations, detraction, persecution, and calumny. In short, as the author of the Imitation observes: "The cross, therefore, is always ready and everywhere awaiteth thee; thou canst not escape it" (Bk. 2, Ch. 12). Happy is the one that embraces the cross and carries it as he ought. "Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebr. 12, 2).

Let us not complain, since we have Him as model Who has endured such "opposition from sinners" (Hebr. 12, 3). We have not yet "resisted unto blood." Oh, that we would esteem highly our portion in the cross of the Lord, and every day gratefully accept the little splin-

ters which we find on our pathway, as precious pledges of the love of Jesus.

Second Point

WE SHOULD LOVE THE CROSS

If Jesus loved His cross, because through it He could glorify His heavenly Father, and if obedience towards the Father's holy Will was for Him the greatest joy, then we are obliged for the same reasons to esteem our cross and love it. We are children of God and His holy pleasure must be paramount with us; we must be concerned about His greater honor above all else; we must strive the more to restore it to Him because we ourselves have so often deprived Him of it by our sins. Since Jesus loved His cross, because He so loved us and desired our eternal happiness, and since He was determined to repurchase heaven for us at any price, are we not under the same obligations to love our cross? There is nothing of greater importance than our eternal salvation, and never can we purchase it at too dear a price. Our cross, united with the cross of the Saviour, is the instrument, the pledge, and the price of our salvation, without which it is impossible to reach heaven. No one lacks crosses in this world, but how unlike are the cross-bearers. Only the chosen few, the true followers of Jesus, value the cross as He did and love it, and for them it will prove a source of true consolation, a pledge of eternal bliss. St. John of the Cross found his paradise on earth in the cross, and desired only more crosses and more contempt as a reward for his labors. How foolish are those who fly from the cross; it follows them whithersoever they go, becomes doubly burdensome, and without merit for

heaven. More deplorable, still, were it for religious, who call themselves spouses of Christ crucified, to evade the humiliations and hardships of their holy vocation and to refuse to share the cross with Him.

Affections: O Divine Saviour, with all the citizens of heaven and the children of Holy Church on earth, I thank Thee today for the ineffable good that Thou hast entrusted to us when Thou didst permit Thy holy cross, the instrument of our redemption to be found. Glory be to Thee, holy cross, thou object of our love, thou memorial of the death of Jesus. Protect Holy Church, be her defense against enemies. To us, O Lord, vouchsafe the grace to accept with sentiments of lively faith and grateful love, the portion of Thy cross that Thou wouldst give us, that signed here below with the seal of Thy cross, we may be found worthy one day to partake of the glory of Thy cross in heaven.

Resolution: I will recognize God's special goodness in the crosses He sends me, and will esteem and love them.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Hail, holy cross, our only hope!"

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF BLESSED JULIE BILLIART

FOUNDRESS OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME

MAY 13TH

"Who shall find a valiant woman? Her children rose up, and called her blessed" (Prov. 31, 10, 28).

First Prelude: Picture Blessed Julie in heavenly glory

adorned with the triple crown of virginity, of the apostolate, and of unbloody, voluntary martyrdom, in the midst of her transfigured daughters.

Second Prelude: Grant me grace, O good God, through imitation of the virtues of Blessed Julie to make of my life a loving oblation, that I may live and die as a worthy member of our Congregation.

First Point

BLESSED JULIE DISTINGUISHED HERSELF BY PERFECT SIMPLICITY

Julie led a life of hardship from her youth, but the full strength of her character shone out with a glorious lustre in the dark hour when her father, falling a victim to adverse circumstances, was forced to see his family left absolutely without resources. In spite of her frail constitution, Julie worked hard to help support the destitute family. Her strength was not equal to the task, and soon the exertion began to tell on Julie's health, till she was forced to take to bed. Through a pilgrimage, which the whole family made to the shrine of the Holy Face, Julie obtained her cure. But a fresh trial was in store for her. In consequence of a nervous shock suffered on the occasion of an attempt on her father's life, Julie, at the age of twenty-four, became a complete cripple, from which affliction she was cured, miraculously, only after twenty years, during the course of a novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Her whole life was a succession of trials, but her enlightened soul superabounded with joy in the midst of tribulations. In the face of insurmountable difficulties, such as only the founders of religious institutions have experienced, she was wont to exclaim: "Oh, how good is the good God!" When all the world

seemed turned against her and her work, when even the authorities of Holy Church doubted her mission, her undaunted confidence in the good God buoyed up her courageous soul safely to the accomplishment of her project.

Heroic suppression of self, complete renunciation of the praise and favor of men marked each of her actions. It was her conviction that God would overlook all our petty weaknesses provided we labored with forgetfulness and immolation of self for His honor. She retrenched herself in personal wants, even the most necessary, and in true simplicity would say: "For a poor uneducated woman it suffices." And again: "Let us purchase heaven for ourselves and for others. Souls are not won without suffering." Human considerations were wholly at variance with her righteous trend of mind and heart,—she reckoned not with earthly means. She rejected the most promising offers if they boded ill to the schools for the poor. It was her greatest pleasure to counsel her sisters as follows: "If we only understood to leave self out of all consideration everything would succeed a thousand times better." Hence, we note the implicit confidence shown her by the children and the people at large. The former said of her "Mother Julie is love itself," and after her death the people spoke of her as the "smiling saint."

Her charming simplicity inspired the great as well as the lowly with reverence, love and confidence. Her whole demeanor was unaffected, natural, hearty; she shunned excessive severity as well as laxity, and guarded against unnatural reserve. She discharged all her duties calmly, with evenness of temper, which knew no hardships, and desired neither thanks nor recognition. Nothing in her exterior bespoke the fire of divine love that seemed to consume her heart. Julie was extremely simple, un-

affected, yet withal holy and pleasing to God. She directed her eyes solely to her duty, fearing not to expose self-love. Her words and actions were characterized by openness and candor, paired with uncompromising, yet modest firmness. "God alone in mind and heart" was ever her watchword and rule of action. "Nothing on earth," she said, "ought to be simpler that the heart of a Sister of Notre Dame, which should reflect God alone." Such simple souls she deemed fit to aid her in her heaven-sent mission "to teach the little ones the value of their souls, and to train up Christian mothers and Christian families." And, indeed, her mission was doubly arduous on account of the terrible aftermath of the French Revolution, which had laid waste some of the fairest portions of the Master's Vineyard.

Does Blessed Julie detect in me the mark of her genuine daughters—a noble, selfless heart? Or, is "self" still the center of my thoughts and actions? Self-effacement is indispensable to fruitful labor for the salvation of souls.

Second Point

FORTITUDE AND BOUNDLESS TRUST OF BLESSED JULIE

Blessed Julie possessed a high degree of fortitude. She was not guided by blind fervor, but acted rather on principle, and always remained complete master of self. God initiated her early in life in the mystery of the cross. Protracted illness, temporal losses and persecutions detached her tender heart from earthly things and established her in perfect resignation. As Foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame, this 'valiant woman' was forced to fight a painful battle for the main-

tenance of the Holy Rule. These contradictions were fraught with discouraging pangs of soul, poignant humiliations, and bitter disillusionments, the more painful to nature because occasioned even by ecclesiastical superiors and by some of her own spiritual daughters, who rebelled against their sorely-tried, saintly Mother. God chastised the Congregation and every blow was but an echo of our Lord's question to Peter: "Lovest thou Me more than these?" But Julie persevered with marvelous fortitude on the cheerless path of suffering, holding fast to Divine Providence, to the cross and to Jesus in the Tabernacle. With calm and unshaken trust, with a spirit strong in faith and buoyant heart she devoted herself to her duties. Amid all her sufferings, she never once forfeited peace and quiet of soul. "May the cross of Jesus live! The cross be our sole happiness!" These words were a sweet restorative to her soul satiated with sufferings. Her magnaminity in bearing trials, and her wholehearted love of the cross, which had become second nature, accompanied her on all her journeys. She often voiced the conviction that in the spiritual life great things can be accomplished only on the foundation of the cross.

"Courage, my dear daughters," she was often heard to say. These words which she loved to repeat in hours of heavy trials, but showed forth her generous, trustful soul. She suffered no hardships to discourage her, and with childlike abandon to the loving arms of God she adored the inscrutable designs and dispensations of Providence. "The eye of God watches over us." That was her greatest comfort. Her most beautiful maxims pertain to confidence: "Human wisdom is good, but we must *build* on God's grace alone." "In confidence we shall have victory." "Our confidence must grow as our

difficulties multiply." "Have faith and confidence and you will find sweet peace even amid the most violent storms." The cry of our heart must ever be, "How good is the good God!"

While lying on her bed of suffering, Julie who escaped the fury of the revolutionaries only by divine protection, was one day rapt in ecstasy, and saw in spiritual vision her crucified Saviour surrounded by countless virgins wearing a garb unfamiliar to her; as she was contemplating the ravishing spectacle, she heard the words: "Behold the daughters whom I give you in the Institute which will be marked by My Cross and designed for the education of youth." We, too, were among the chosen souls revealed to her in this vision at Compiègne. Let us walk as true children of such a Mother, in unswerving trust in God, and in times of temptation and discouragement, let us ground our confidence solely on the mercy of God.

In her last illness was verified in all its vigor, the consummate perfection of her trust in God. As Blessed Julie built her Congregation on the foundation of trust in God's benign goodness, so the crucified spouse of Christ departed this life in holy peace, unafraid about the future of her daughters. Let us thank God with our whole heart for the heroic example of virtue set us by our Blessed Mother Julie. Let us seek to resemble her in our little trials and difficulties and often ask ourselves whether or not, in the oft-repeated words of Blessed Julie, we are like "a strong rock in mid-ocean," whether or not the great grace of daily Holy Communion tends to strengthen and fortify our hearts and make us fit instruments for the Divinest of all divine works,—the instruction of youth.

Affections: O Blessed Julie, who from the heights of

heaven dost look upon thy daughters, obtain for me grace to be humble, unselfish and firm as thou wert. Imbue me with unshakable confidence in the power and goodness of God, and fortify me against discouragement and despondence; help me to labor zealously to sanctify myself, that I may work efficaciously in the spirit of our Holy Rule in the Master's Vineyard. Look lovingly upon our Congregation, and suffer not our fervor ever to grow cold. Help us, in particular, to adhere steadfastly to the principles for which thou didst make such heroic sacrifices and suffer so keenly. Obtain for all our members grace to preserve the spirit of the Rule: humility, love, obedience and childlike devotion to Mary. Replenish our hearts with zeal for God's honor and the salvation of souls and help us to live and die as true children of our Congregation, which was signed from the beginning with the seal of the Cross.

Resolution: In honor of Blessed Julie, I will bear all hardships and sufferings joyously, and perform all my work in her spirit of unselfishness and implicit trust in God.

Spiritual Bouquet: "How good is the good God!"

Prayer: Soul of Christ . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN NEPOMUCENE

May 16th

"Blessed is the man that hath not slipped by a word out of his mouth" (Eccles. 14, 1).

First Prelude: Picture St. John in heavenly glory,

which he enjoys as valiant defender of the seal of Confession.

Second Prelude: Help us, O glorious Confessor, in imitation of thy example, to be faithful to the duties imposed upon us by our state of life, and to guard our tongue.

First Point

ST. JOHN, A VICTIM OF DEVOTION TO DUTY AND SACRAMENTAL SILENCE

The glorious saint whose feast we commemorate today, the invincible Martyr of the Sacramental seal, is a striking example of fidelity to duty. Mindful of his noble calling, to lead souls to heaven by word and example, he walked perfect and holy in the presence of the Lord. His path, like that of all servants of God, was marked by crosses. Fidelity in the discharge of the duties of the sacred ministry made him a glorious martyr, whom God chose to reveal the solicitude with which He guards the sublime mystery of the Sacrament of Penance. The Lord, likewise, desires of us great devotion to duty in religious life. To be lacking in self-sacrifice and devotion would be tantamount to proving unworthy of one's holy vocation. Our exalted mission is to give testimony to the truths of our faith by a holy life, by charity, and unflinching fidelity in our daily duties, by self-denial and sacrifice, in order to achieve a crown similar to that of the martyrs.

Is this my conception of my holy calling, and do I aim at steeling myself with love of God, by conscientiously conquering all difficulties, that I may be able calmly and with assurance to face new and greater trials?

Second Point

IT IS THE SACRED DUTY OF ALL CHRISTIANS, BUT ESPECIALLY OF RELIGIOUS, TO GUARD THEIR TONGUE

God glorified the silence of His faithful servant by preserving his tongue incorrupt for centuries. It had kept the seal of Confession inviolate, and amid the awful tortures of the rack, pronounced only the holy names of Jesus and Mary. This sublime example should serve us as a potent reminder to guard our tongue. "He that keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from distress," says the Holy Ghost (Prov. 21, 23). And St. James writes: "If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his heart, this man's religion is vain." Religious life is inconceivable where full liberty is given to the tongue; where silence is deliberately violated at places and times forbidden by the Rule. What misery in the wake of religious who speak whatever occurs to them and whose tongues spare neither the priest of God nor superiors and co-religious! How heavily they encumber their soul, and how often they become accessory to the sins of others! Silent religious, on the contrary, advance on the path of virtue and edify all with whom they live. The Lord will speak to silent religious, for by silence they learn to converse with God. Is it not especially in hours of silence, or spiritual solitude, that the soul receives particular graces, consolation and enlightenment? Silence is the school of virtue, the source of peace and love. Let us examine ourselves as to what use we have made of our tongue.

Affections: O glorious martyr, who wast deemed worthy to offer thy life in defense of the inviolability of

the seal of Confession, obtain for us the grace to discharge the duties of our state with great devotion and fidelity, and thus to be an oblation for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. Help us to do penance for our sins of the tongue by conscientious silence, and help us, in future, to employ this member only for a holy purpose, to praise God, comfort the neighbor, and caution him against harm. May thy heroic sacrifice for the integrity of the seal of Confession obtain the grace for us poor sinners to partake of its fruits to the fullest extent.

Resolution: We will carefully guard our tongue.

Spiritual Bouquet: "He that keepeth his tongue, keepeth his soul from distress."

Prayer: Our Father . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF ST. RITA

May 22nd

"Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odour of sweetness" (Eph. 5, 2).

First Prelude: Picture St. Rita in her Convent home at Cascia, apart from her Sisters because of the wound on her forehead, but ever near Jesus, the Lover of those in suffering.

Second Prelude: Dear St. Rita, obtain for us God's grace to be ever content in trial and sorrow, and to understand that thou canst obtain for us the favors we ask, or ever better favors than our own limited understanding has given us the courage to ask.

First Point

ST. RITA IS THE INSPIRATION OF EVERY STATE OF LIFE, BUT PARTICULARLY OF THOSE WHO, LIKE HER, ARE BOUND IN RELIGIOUS LIFE BY THE VOWS OF POVERTY, CHASTITY AND OBEDIENCE

Only too often do we think of the Saints of God as His creatures separated from us by an infinite gulf. Each time, however, a Saint of God is canonized, we realize that after all that person was born as we were born, received in large measure the gifts we have received, was bound by the same commandments, or by the same counsels to perfection, and died after a busy life as we ourselves must die. St. Rita had no brilliant gifts of mind or body. She was born of parents that were poor, but honored in their town-land, and she saw first the light of day in a little village far from the thoughts of civilization. Her birth was showered with heavenly graces, and her life as a child was marked by extreme simplicity in thought, in word and in deed. Because of her obedience to parents who loved her, she was wedded to a young man of her home town, and this in spite of the fact that she longed to consecrate herself to the service of Jesus Christ, and Him Crucified. This man proved to be anything but that which was hoped from him on the part of the parents of Rita, and soon began a life entirely different from anything they had dreamt of. Two children were born of this marriage, two boys who followed closely in the footsteps of their father. This woman of God, however, brought him back to the Saviour, only to lose him in death. Over his murdered corpse the two sons shrieked out their vengeance. Their mother, however, opening wide her hands offered her dead husband to the God Who had created him and asked only one favor—that God in

His goodness might sweeten and strengthen the hearts of their children until they should realize that it is God Who has said: Vengeance is mine; I will repay. She offered her sons unto God; and they were both accepted by Him within the year. After their death she applied for a place amongst the Augustinians in Cascia. Three times was she rejected—but on one glorious morning in the Maytime she was found by the Sisters and by the Mother, who had bid her begone, not outside the Convent Walls, but in the very heart of the Convent of the Augustinian Nuns in Cascia. There she lived for two score years as a professed religious. In 1443 her prayer that she might share in the Passion of Jesus was answered. On her forehead she bore the mark of the smallest of his thorns. In 1450 she went with her Sisters to Rome for a Jubilee Year, and in 1457 she departed this life crowned not only with the mark of God's love, but with the merit and blessings of a woman of God.

Second Point

ST. RITA, ADVOCATE OF THOSE IN NEED

Death makes no change in the life of the servants of God, or in the life of God's enemies. They live; but for the latter, the evil designs of an evil life are simply intensified, whilst for the good the desires of drawing near to God are realized, the hopes of helping God's creatures through an ever abundant source of God's mercy are ever the more realized. Who is there amongst us but that understands how near God is to those that love Him? Who is there that fails to appreciate the fact that between those who live in this valley of tears and those that have gone into the Kingdom of God, there is a perfect union?

Who is there likewise that could fail to understand that the servants of God who have passed through the same difficulties which we have met in the way of common-place, every-day living, servants of God who understand what we ourselves have suffered because in their time they themselves underwent those same sufferings; who is there that will not realize that these Saints are the ones to whom we should turn in moments of particular need? St. Rita is the saint of every state of life. For four hundred years and more was she forgotten. When the world most needed her, however, she was remembered and in 1900 she was canonized by Leo XIII of blessed memory. No one of our modern Popes had his hand more closely on the pulse of the needs of our modern civilization. He canonized this servant of God, not only because she was the advocate of those in need, but because she was the model of every state in life.

St. Rita wrote no books, nor did she do anything except to teach us the worth of the common-place life, lived humbly in the sight of Jesus Christ. To her we turn, and of her we ask grace to live happily the dark days as well as the bright days. From her we ask, through the infinite merits of the Sacred Heart, light to know that her life was spent in the joy of God in the bright days and in the dark days.

Affections: Glorious St. Rita, incorrupt in a chaste body, light of Holy Church, heroic in sacrifice, who knowest the way to the Heart of Jesus, intercede for us. Obtain for us grace to imitate thy example of virtue, preserve us from the spirit of compromise, and help us to adore the loving Hand of God in every affliction. St. Rita, be our guide in perfect living, in every state of life.

Resolution: The dark days as well as the bright ones

are God's gifts. I shall accept all His gifts in sorrow as well as in joy. Him shall I thank for the dreary days, and the happy days.

Spiritual Bouquet: Dear God, grant me to see Thy holy Hand in days of sorrow as well as in the happy days!

Prayer: Our Father . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF SAINT ANGELA MERICI

Foundress of the Ursuline Order

May 31st

"They that instruct others unto justice shall shine as stars for all eternity" (Dan. 23, 3).

First Prelude: Picture St. Angela in possession of that eternal crown which is promised to those who instruct others unto justice.

Second Prelude: In union with all those souls who, under God, are indebted to St. Angela for the glory they now enjoy in heaven, let us thank God for having raised her up to provide for thousands the great blessing of religious instruction.

First Point

ST. ANGELA, THE FIRST OF A CLASS OF APOSTOLIC WOMEN TO EDUCATE YOUNG GIRLS, MOTHER OF A COUNTLESS LINE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS.

"Blessed are the pure of heart." To them it is given to say, while that Sacramental Presence lasts, "Were not our hearts burning within us, whilst He spoke in the way?" So it was with that angelic maiden of Desanzano, Angela Merici, born in 1474. What words the Divine Guest spoke to her soul, it is needless to inquire. He has

said, "I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I, but that it be kindled?" Angela was to enkindle that sacred flame in many a soul. Her own, therefore, was to be a furnace of living fire. Divine Providence appoints saintly men and women to guard mankind, to minister to their wants. "Who makest Thy angels spirits, and thy ministers a burning fire." Enamored from childhood of a life of prayer and self-sacrifice, of entire devotion to the good of others, Angela ran forward in the practice of virtue. In the soul of Angela—child, maiden and woman—the solemn consecration of her life to Christ Crucified, was the one thought and hope which gave purpose and shape to her soul—to make God's will her own and to allow not one particle of the grace from on High to fall useless on her soul that she might render herself worthy of His designs. She was in spirit and truth the faithful companion of Mary and Joseph in that glorious path which leads to Calvary. This Angela Merici, destined to be the leader of women down through the centuries, God first made drink the waters of bitterness and desolation. Her undaunted confidence in the good God buoyed up her courageous soul in the face of difficulties. In a miraculous vision at Brudazzo, Angela heard the voice of our Lord commanding her to establish in Brescia a select company of maidens. God called her to the labor of procuring by manifold and wonderful means the eternal salvation of souls. He at first moved her to found a company of maidens under the name and patronage of St. Ursula, for the purpose of promoting and propagating the Christian education of young girls.

By obscure toil and suffering, by constant striving, in the face of ever-recurring obstacles, Angela accomplished the mighty enterprise divinely foreshown. She counseled the maidens who were drawn to her, and those who strove

to imitate her. The oppressed, and those whose hearts were bruised and bleeding from wrongs inflicted by the world, came to her because she was unworldly, because she was heavenly-minded, because a healing virtue went forth from her, filling the very atmosphere of her home. There was wisdom in her counsels and consolations: "Whatever you would wish at your dying hour to have done in health, that do now while you may," was one of the counsels by which she gave courage to many souls. She was the guide of all classes and both sexes in the road of Christian perfection, the trusted counselor of princes, a reformer who shone by the unearthly splendor of her own heroic generosity and self-denial in the age of a false and calamitous Reformation. Complete renunciation of the praise and favor of men marked each of her actions; she reckoned not with earthly means. To a life of utter devotion to Christ and His interests, as the natural sequence of their Divine espousals, Angela had trained her spiritual daughters. These, in turn, living up to this ideal in the midst of the world, were to educate the young girls entrusted to them, training such of them as the spirit of God moved to adopt the virginal life, to become in due time devoted and self-sacrificing brides of the Lamb.

Does St. Angela detect in me the mark of her genuine daughters—a noble heart, cherishing an unworldly and self-sacrificing spirit? an apostolate of prayer? of good example? of a good word? Though our occupation be ever so hidden who should not be able to speak a word of cheer, of encouragement, of counsel, of consolation?

Second Point

SPIRIT OF ST. ANGELA MERICI.

God, in forming a saint destined to be the parent of a countless line of pious and motherly educators, formed

her heart to all the dearest and holiest affections. Hearts filled to overflowing with the deepest, purest and most unfailing motherly love are needed in the great schools that claim Angela Merici as Foundress, Protectress and Model. Angela worshipped Christ in the persons of His poor. She beheld God in the souls of all His children, and found no difficulty in forsaking the sweets of the spiritual communion with Him on the Altar for the still sweeter occupations of ministering to Him in the persons of those who needed corporal and spiritual aid. It was with vigorous good sense that she sought to strengthen the bonds of spiritual life through the affections. "Spiritual love," she declared, "is incomparably more potent than natural love." In her Counsels she bade her teachers enlarge upon these promises, especially the "dispirited, irresolute, faint-hearted": "Let them doubt not that although they may have great tribulation all will pass quickly." "They will never be abandoned in their necessities, God will provide for them." She appealed to a trust in Divine Providence—"The strength of the Holy Spirit be in all—faithfully carry out your duty—be not discouraged, even when you find yourself devoid of qualities necessary for your employment. He who called you to it cannot abandon you in your moment of need." "Place your hopes on high, and not on the things of earth." "The little we have to endure in this life is nothing in comparison to the wealth of happiness stored up in Paradise." "You must know and hold for certain that God will never fail to provide you with all that is necessary if you are careful to do your part."

These and other most precious reminders of a dying saint are the beautiful and most practical lessons on the lofty esteem in which we should hold our own institute

and the virginal life which is its immediate purpose and the mainspring of its efficiency; the unlimited and unwearied charity with which we must cultivate the happiness and spiritual interests of the flocks of devoted maiden souls. We were among the chosen souls revealed in Angela's vision at Brudazzo. Let us, her spiritual daughters, ever keep fresh within our hearts her last words of prayer: "Let the bond of charity so draw you to each other that you may prize each other, help each other, and support each other in Christ Jesus." "Be earnest in your endeavor to be thus united and doubt not that our Lord shall be in the midst of you." "Your efforts shall be crowned with success." "I assure you, that if you stand together with united hearts you shall be like a mighty rock or tower, impregnable against all the ill fortune, the persecutions, and the Satanic assaults of the future. Moreover, I assure you, that I shall be always in your midst, assisting you to obtain the object of your prayers." "Hold this for certain that in that hour of need, especially, you shall know me to be a true friend to you."

Let us walk as true daughters of such a Mother, in unswerving trust in God, placing our confidence solely on the mercy of God. Let us thank God for the heroic example of virtue set us by our holy mother, St. Angela. In daily Holy Communion, let us beg our Divine Spouse to strengthen and fortify our hearts and make us fit instruments to promote the interests of His Sacred Heart.

Affections: Blessed St. Angela, chosen to be the patroness and Mother of Christ's flock, we entreat thee, by that burning zeal for God's glory with which thou didst devote thy life to the instruction of youth, to protect and pray for the children committed to our care. Intercede

for them that they may do only what is pleasing to their Divine Model, Jesus, and His most Holy Mother. Beg God to grant us thy confidence in Him, thy abandonment to His Holy Will, thy humility, obedience and charity, and thy fervent love of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist that in all things we may seek the glory of God and the interests of His Sacred Heart.

Resolution: An earnest endeavor to acquire the spirit of our Order.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Do your duty, be full of trust, of courage, of high hope."

Prayer: Our Father . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF ST. ANTHONY

June 13th

"Follow . . . holiness without which no man shall see God" (Hebr. 12, 14).

First Prelude: Picture St. Anthony with the lily, image of purity and sanctity.

Second Prelude: Through the intercession of St. Anthony, ask for grace to strive unremittingly for purity and holiness of life.

First Point

ANTHONY RENOUNCES THE WORLD

Flowers, rich in color and perfume, birds, prized for plumage and song, and innocent babes, children, sinless young men and women—remind us of Paradise. In the Canticle applied to Jesus Christ as the Spouse of the Church and of every soul devoted to Him, the Son of God and Man says: "I am the flower of the field and the lily of the valleys" (2, 1). "As the lily is among

thorns, so is my love," the Church, every innocent person, every devoted soul (2, 2). And the Spouse says of Him: "My Beloved is gone down into his garden (the place of pure, holy delight) to the bed of aromatical spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies" (6, 1).

Our Beloved, Christ Jesus, Spouse of souls, loves to come "into His garden," to behold their labors. He gives them special light and strength, provided they are pure and seek only His holy interests, and the glory of the Father. The lilies He loves to gather are undoubtedly the good works they produce with the aid of grace. But to delight His all-holy eye with the beauty of the lilies that bloom in the garden of their hearts, they must produce works of holiness and sanctity; they must be motivated solely by the desire to promote the honor of God among men, and to help spread His holy Kingdom in the hearts of those that are still outside the true Fold.

The great saints whom God gave to His holy Church —among them St. Anthony—to fortify and strengthen her, have always been fervent in the fulfilling of His holy Will. They have always produced fruits and flowers to delight the Heart of their Beloved when He came "into His garden" in Holy Communion. Their pure and holy lives were to Him in reality a "bed of aromatical spices." Nothing daunted them in the service of their Lord and Master, for they trusted implicitly to the Lord, and said in very truth: "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" (Psalms XXVI:1). Jesus, mystically present in the Blessed Eucharist, the Sacrament of His love, delights to draw souls away from creatures that they may rest in His pure and holy love: "I to my Beloved, and my Beloved to me, who feedeth among lilies" (Cant. 6, 2),

pledges of purest love, emblems of innocence and sanctity. Do you wonder that painters and sculptors represent St. Anthony of Padua with a lily in his hand or a lily near him? From earliest youth St. Anthony was in constant co-operation with the grace of God, led a pure, sinless life, and advanced in virtue and sanctity all the days of his life. If it is God's delight to be with the children of men, this is true especially of God's association with the innocent and pure of heart. No more beautiful praise can be given a young person than that he or she is like a lily, white of soul, pure, innocent, spotless, spreading the sweet odor of virtue.

Born in 1195 at Lisbon, of wealthy, religious parents, St. Anthony received the name of Fernando in baptism. Lisbon, the capital of Portugal, was a seaport, and, therefore, full of temptations. It boasted of a brilliant society to which Fernando's parents evidently belonged. Life was marvellously attractive to the handsome, clever, yet high-strung, sensitive boy, with hot, Southern blood in his veins. When he was fifteen, Fernando offered his stainless life to God, renounced the world and entered the monastery of Canons Regular, who lived under the rule of St. Augustine, just outside of Lisbon. Here he received the white habit and made his first vows. On no point in his early career do the historians insist with such tenacity as on the severity and intensity of the struggle in deciding this step. To be spared the annoyance which frequent visits of friends and relatives entailed, he petitioned his superiors to send him to the Mother House at Coimbra, an ideal home for one whose life was devoted to prayer and study, where he laid the foundation of his future marvellous career. While Fernando was advancing daily in holiness and learning, the two great Friar

Orders of St. Dominic and of St. Francis had taken root in the soil of Spain and of Italy. In 1220 the Order of Friars Minor received its baptism of blood in Morocco.

When Fernando saw the relics of the martyrs who courageously shed their blood for Christ, the bodies of men with whom he had probably spoken a few weeks before, his very soul was on fire with the passionate desire to die for Christ and he knew only one way to attain it. From this moment he had no rest till he had exchanged the fair white habit of St. Augustine, that he had worn ten years, and his quiet life of study, for the rough habit and cord of St. Francis and the prospect of a martyr's crown. He obtained reluctant permission of his superior to leave, and as he left the monastery, the home of so many happy years, one of those who loved him much called after him: "Go—go! you will doubtless become a Saint!" "When you hear that I am a Saint, give glory to God," replied Fernando. In little more than twelve years he was raised to the altars.

Second Point

ANTHONY, THE HOLY FRANCISCAN FRIAR

Fernando joined the Friars and saturated himself with the spirit of the Franciscan Order. Having made his profession, he asked the Friars to change his name; Fernando was the name of kings. He received the name Anthony in memory of the great hermit. Anthony had not forgotten his great desire, and he begged his superiors to send him to Morocco. In the autumn of 1220, he sailed for *Centa,* but no sooner had he reached the goal than, worn out and wasted by the strain of the last few months, and doubtless by the austerities he had lately

practiced, he fell ill, and for a whole winter lay between life and death. It must have been the keenest disappointment of his life. The martyr's crown hung before his eyes, and he could not grasp it. Anthony learnt that he was not called to shed his blood in Morocco, for another, and to one of his temperament, even greater sacrifice awaited him. More wonderful than any miracle, a greater triumph than his most eloquent sermon, was the perfect renunciation of his will, his complete resignation to God's holy Will. With the simplicity of a child, Anthony embarked for Portugal as soon as he could be moved. He wished to regain his health.

But God had other designs for his servant. The ship was driven on the shores of Sicily by contrary winds, and Anthony landed at Messina, where news arrived of the General Chapter to be held in May, 1221, at Assisi. Anthony at once asked leave to go, and reached Assisi in time. His heart must have burnt within him as he saw for the first time St. Francis, blessing his children, about two thousand in number, and sending them forth into all parts of the world—that Seraphic Father, who, like himself, had sought the crown of martyrdom in vain. No one guessed that in the young, unknown Portuguese friar there stood next to St. Francis, himself, the glory of the Order, the miracle worker who eleven years later would be invoked as a saint. The Chapter was over; appointments had been made; but nobody wanted Anthony. No one surmised that this humble friar was a most distinguished scholar, who clung to humility, the guardian and protector of every virtue. But God exalts the humble.

An ordination to the priesthood took place at Forli, and Anthony, present, probably, as companion to the Provincial, was called upon to preach. After attempting in

vain to excuse himself, Anthony preached, taking for his text, it is believed, "Christ became obedient for us unto death." He began, in the fear of God, with simple words, but enlightened by heavenly grace, and assisted by his memory, which served him in place of books, he explained the deep mysteries of Holy Scripture, and captivated the minds of his hearers with such overpowering eloquence, that all were astonished. Carried away by his oratory, Dominicans and Francisans cried with one voice: "Never did man speak as did this man."

God no longer permitted this brilliant light to be hidden. The fame of his preaching reached St. Francis and Anthony was sent to preach (1222) in public in Italy and France, where he was universally known as "The Saint." And when Anthony closed his eyes in death, nine years after he began his public career, the children of Padua began to run about like sheep, crying: "Our Blessed Father is dead! The Saint is dead! St. Anthony is dead!" Anthony died June 13, 1231, and on May 30, 1232, before a year elapsed, Pope Gregory IX canonized the Saint. No other confessor has been so quickly raised to the altars, not even St. Francis, who was canonized two years after his death. So great was the conviction of the godliness of St. Anthony, so universally esteemed were his innocence and sanctity.

You need not be canonized to be a saint, nor put on the altars after death; you need not work miracles; you need not prophesy; you need not die for the faith. But in order to live holily, you must regulate your thoughts, desires, inclinations, actions and sufferings according to the holy Will of God; you must love God above all things, your neighbor as yourself, and in all circumstances of life fulfill your duty faithfully.

Affections: Illustrious Saint Anthony, lily of purity, we salute thee and give thanks to God for the wonders of grace He wrought in thy soul. With the words of St. Bonaventure, we greet thee: angelic soul, rich in the knowledge of the angels, the faith of the patriarchs, the wisdom of the prophets, the zeal of the apostles, the purity of the virgins, the mortification of the confessors, the courage of the martyrs. Intercede for us that in imitation of thy example we may strive unintermittently to become an image of Christ. Let us bear in mind that this is our duty, our vocation, for he who does not strive after sanctity will be lost and can have no share in the kingdom of heaven. "This is the Will of God, your sanctification."

Resolution: I will try to realize in all my thoughts, words and actions that striving after virtue is my first task in life.

Spiritual Bouquet: He who wishes to be saved must in a certain way be a saint.

Prayer: O Jesus, living in Mary . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART OF MARY

SATURDAY AFTER THE FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

"Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God. . . . The dwelling in thee, is, as it were of all rejoicing" (Ps. 86, 3, 7).

Firse Prelude: Picture the Blessed Virgin extending her arms to draw us all to her maternal bosom.

Second Prelude: O my God, Thou hast created my heart to love Thee; grant that striving for purity and sanctity, I may daily grow in Thy love.

First Point

THE SACRED HEART OF MARY, THE MASTER-PIECE OF THE MOST BLESSED TRINITY

Among the creatures that He willed to create, God saw from all eternity one that surpassed all the others in beauty and glory. It was Mary, the purest of virgins, upon whom His eye rested with exquisite delight. She was destined according to the designs of Eternal Wisdom to become the Mother of the Redeemer, the Queen of heaven and earth. Her heart was created to correspond to so sublime a dignity. The Eternal Father in virtue of His Divine Omnipotence formed in the Blessed Virgin the heart of a Daughter who should surpass all creatures in reverence, docility and obedience toward Him. The Son, by reason of His Divine Wisdom, formed the heart of a Mother, to whom He would be subject, and who should embrace all mankind, with the strongest and most tender mother-love. The Holy Ghost wrought in Mary with inexpressible zeal and fashioned in her a heart so inflamed with love, so fruitful and bridal in its affections, so admirable, that a single "Fiat" from its depths in the fulness of time sufficed to produce results more marvelous than the creation of the world. The first movements of this spotless heart were directed to God, its Creator, so that Mary could justly say of herself: "In the beginning of my ways the Lord possessed me" (Eccles. 8, 22).

Let us offer praise and thanksgiving to the most Blessed Trinity for having bounteously dowered the heart of Mary with graces and prerogatives. Let us, with fullest confidence and childlike love, fly to this refuge of all poor sinners, to this abyss of compassion, and make

ourselves worthy of her protection, by striving to imitate her perfect accomplishment of the Will of God. This Will exacts of us to sanctify ourselves by daily, untiring fidelity to the exercises of our holy calling. Doing this, we shall always find the heart of our Mother, full of grace, open for us; then at her hand we will happily reach our heavenly home, where in union with her we will praise and glorify God for all eternity.

Second Point

THE SACRED HEART OF MARY, OUR MODEL IN PURITY AND SANCTITY

The most brilliant pearl in the diadem adorning the Sacred Brow of Mary is her incomparable purity and sanctity. With predilection Holy Church applies to her the words of the Canticle of Canticles: "Thou art all fair, my beloved, and there is no stain in thee" (4, 7). This Immaculate Heart is the unblemished mirror in which the Blessed Trinity beholds its unmarred Image; it is the undefiled vessel, untouched by the stain of sin, the mystic work-shop of the Holy Ghost, in which His grace found no obstacles; it is the new paradise, the blest earth, of which the second Adam was formed, Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world. Mary was not only created pure and spotless, but she remained intact of the slightest stain of sin, even the least personal guilt. Spurning every other love, her heart tended only toward God, and knew no other desire than to do what was pleasing to Him. By this holy endeavor her purity and love grew continually.

Let us endeavor to imitate the glorious example of the Blessed Virgin, to the best of our ability. We, too,

should daily grow in purity and sanctity. We are consecrated to God, are spouses of the Immaculate Lamb. We have united ourselves to Him by holy vows; let us now preserve Him our heart in undivided love. Oh, that it might ever remain a true bridal chamber, in which Jesus, our Bridegroom, delights to dwell! Let us put our heart under the protection and maternal solicitude of Mary that she may succor us, that as prudent virgins we may follow in her footsteps here below and one day be permitted to follow the Lamb whithersoever It goeth.

Affections: O Mirror of Justice, I greet Thy Immaculate Heart with the salutation of all hearts devoted to thy love. How amiable and charming thou art, thou lily of purity; how virtuous, O holiest Mother of my Saviour! I rejoice in thy purity and beauty, in which the Godhead is reflected. O my Queen, O my Mother, so much loved by the Blessed Trinity, turn thy merciful eyes not away from my guilt-laden soul! Oh, obtain for me pardon and eternal salvation.

Resolution: For the love of the Blessed Virgin I will guard against the least voluntary fault.

Spiritual Bouquet: "A clean heart create in me, O God."

Prayer: Remember, O most gracious Virgin. . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FIRST FRIDAY OF DECEMBER

THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS, OUR HIGHEST GOOD IN LIFE AND OUR REFUGE IN DEATH

"Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. 11, 28).

First Prelude: Picture our Divine Saviour opening His Sacred Heart for us and inviting us to find therein light, help and consolation.

Second Prelude: O Divine Heart, reveal Thyself to me and unite my heart so intimately with Thine that I may desire nothing save to live and die for Thee.

First Point

THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS IS OUR HIGHEST GOOD IN LIFE

Our Divine Saviour invites us lovingly to come to Him and draw from His Heart all the good we need. This is, indeed, the Heart of our most faithful Brother Who has reconciled us with His heavenly Father. It is the Heart of the Good Shepherd Who seeks the lost sheep and lovingly carries it on His shoulder back to the flock. It is the Heart of the merciful Samaritan, Who pours oil and wine into our wounds, and makes us secure in His Sanctuary from the attacks of the enemy. It is the Heart of our loving Redeemer Who has cleansed us in His Blood and freed us from the slavery of Satan. It is the source of graces for us: our help in every need, our strength in weakness, and our comfort in tribulation. It is the Heart of the God-Man, this master-piece of the Holy Spirit, the

union of the noblest, the most sublime, the purest sentiments. Where could ever be found a milder, more generous and sympathetic heart? And this infinitely loving Heart has opened Itself for us, and remains open for all unto the end of time, that all may draw from this inexhaustible source of graces, and taste how sweet the Lord is to all who love Him. Oh, what graces has this Heart in store for those who have consecrated themselves to Him, who seek nothing save Him, desire nothing but to glorify Him and fulfill His holy Will!

Perfection consists in love, and as it is impossible to approach a fire without feeling its warmth, so it is impossible for us to approach the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the burning furnace of love, without feeling an increase of love. Have we not frequently experienced wonderful effects of the love of this Divine Heart? Truly, the Sacred Heart is our strength, our light, our joy, and our happiness even here on earth. Let us, then, endeavor to penetrate ever more deeply into the abyss of this Heart, pondering His love more intently to become more closely united with Him, that this Heart may be our model, the delight and sweetness of our lives, our highest good, our one and all.

Second Point

THE SACRED HEART IS OUR REFUGE IN DEATH

Among the promises made by Jesus to St. Margaret Mary for the clients of His Sacred Heart, we find this consoling one: "I will be their secure refuge in life and especially in death." These words point to a special grace, imparted to the zealous adorers of this Sacred Heart —namely, the grace of final perseverance and a happy

death. This grace is the natural fruit of devotion to the Sacred Heart, for souls who truly venerate this Heart will be solicitous to avoid all that might displease It, and, on the contrary, will be zealous in doing that which pleases this adorable Heart.

In this manner souls steadily grow in virtue, advancing in perfection until the hour of death approaches, when they will be one with the Sacred Heart. This Heart, their highest and only good in life, will now in the decisive moment of death, which decides their fate for all eternity, be their secure refuge. Then Jesus will be their strength, so that they may courageously conquer the last fierce attacks of the Evil One. The thought of the pending judgment is not terrifying, because with St. Margaret Mary they can say: "Oh, how sweet it is to die after having cherished a tender devotion to the Heart of Him Who will be our Judge!" Such souls do not fear the pain of parting from this world for they have long since, for the love of Jesus, renounced all earthly goods, severed all worldly ties, and now there remains but to leave this mortal frame—the body, to go forth to see Him Who was to them more than father, mother, and brother, Who during life was their only love. Should not such a death be blissful!

Affections: O my dear Saviour, I have anew recognized the inexpressible delight of souls who consecrate themselves to Thy Sacred Heart. They find in this Heart all the graces, the comfort, and the help they need. United with Thy loving Heart, they possess all, and there is nothing more to be desired. I consecrate myself to Thee today, anew, and pray Thee to give me an increase of love. Let Thy Sacred Heart be my model, my refuge in every need, my resting-place in life and in death. Give

me grace to breathe out my last sigh in Thy Sacred Heart, and to depart this life in perfect love.

Resolution: I will frequently renew my complete abandonment to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Spiritual Bouquet: "How sweet it is to die after having cherished a tender devotion to the Heart of Him Who will be our Judge."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FIRST FRIDAY OF JANUARY

REVELATIONS CONCERNING THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

"Behold this Heart which has so loved men, and is loved so little by them in return" (Words of our Lord to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque).

First Prelude: Picture to yourself our Lord appearing to St. Margaret Mary showing His Heart, and commissioning her to spread this devotion.

Second Prelude: O Divine Saviour, grant me grace to understand more and more the efficacy of the devotion to Thy Sacred Heart.

First Point

THE APPARITION OF OUR DIVINE LORD

Our Divine Lord did not send one of His heavenly messengers to make known to mankind His desires concerning the devotion to His Sacred Heart. He came in person to reveal the rich treasures of this fountain of grace. What great value must this devotion have in our estimation since it was taught us by the Son of God Him-

self, and how firmly must we believe in its efficacy, embodying, as it does, all the graces of salvation and sanctification! Let us hear what Jesus says to His faithful servant: "My Heart is so filled with love for man that It can no longer contain the flames of this love. It must make itself known that men may enrich themselves with the treasures of this Heart."

True love is ever seeking to reveal itself in actions. If love for Jesus is really aglow in my heart, I will strive to enkindle it in the hearts of others, and according to my ability propagate the devotion to this amiable Heart. Exceeding happiness will be afforded those who according to our Lord's promises strive to practice and promote love and veneration of His Sacred Heart. In the excessive mercy of His Heart, Jesus assurred us that His allpowerful love will grant to all those who communicate on the First Friday of nine consecutive months, the grace of final penitence, and that such shall not die in His disfavor nor without receiving the Sacraments, and that His Divine Heart shall be their safe refuge in this last moment.

What wonderful promises! Dare I hope to participate in them? What will I do today to testify my love for the Sacred Heart?

Second Point

WHAT MOTIVES SHOULD PROMPT US TO PRACTICE AND PROMOTE THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART?

The first motive that should prompt us to venerate the Sacred Heart is the express wish and will of our Divine Saviour Himself, Who desires adoration and homage. Honoring the Sacred Heart is an efficient means to advance in perfection. Jesus Himself assures us that "tepid

souls shall grow fervent." Experience recounts the fulfillment of this promise in numberless striking instances. Another reason for fostering this devotion lies in the fact that it meets one of the greatest needs of the human heart, which longs for sympathy and friendship. Where could we find a heart that cherishes a truer, more ardent and untiring sympathy with us than the Sacred Heart of Jesus? Where is there a friend so loving, so ready to assist us, and at the same time so powerful to render assistance as our loving, merciful Saviour? Why should we fear, having so condescending and powerful a Friend to aid us?

The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is a pledge of our salvation and eternal happiness. "Our Lord has revealed to me," wrote St. Margaret Mary, "that no one who honors His Heart shall be lost." How powerful are the motives that urge us to foster this devotion! How foolish should we be if we did not consecrate ourselves with our whole heart to honor the Sacred Heart! Oh, let it be our most earnest endeavor to honor the Divine Heart of Jesus and to promote this devotion diligently!

Affections: O sweet Jesus, Who didst appear to St. Margaret Mary and reveal to her how pleasing to Thee is the devotion to Thy Sacred Heart, inflame my heart with a burning love for Thy Divine Heart, and an ardent desire to make reparation for the ignominy and outrages men heap upon Thee. Oh, that I could win all hearts to Thy love! That I could lead them all to Thee that they may know how good the Lord is to them that love Him! I implore Thee, O sweet Heart of my Saviour, vouchsafe me the grace to be an apostle of Thy Heart, that I may promote Thy love everywhere.

Resolution: Today I will offer particular manifestations of my love to the Sacred Heart.

Spiritual Bouquet: "Behold this Heart which has loved men so much."

Prayer: Open to me Thy Heart, O Jesus . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FIRST FRIDAY OF FEBRUARY

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CROWN OF THORNS

"He loved me and delivered Himself for me" (Gal. 2, 20).

First Prelude: Picture our Divine Saviour, revealing to St. Margaret Mary His Sacred Heart, encircled with a crown of thorns.

Second Prelude: O sweetest Jesus, give me grace to understand the significance of the crown of thorns.

First Point

THE CROWN OF THORNS ENCIRCLING THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS SIGNIFIES HIS PASSION

The Sacred Heart of Jesus is wounded much more grievously by the sins and infidelities, the coldness and indifference of those who call themselves servants, spouses of this loving Heart, than by the crown of thorns which the cruel soldiers plaited and pressed into His sacred head. Of this sad truth the crown of thorns encircling the picture of the Sacred Heart should remind us. Our Divine Saviour seeks after souls to console Him, saying with the prophet: "And I looked for one that would grieve with Me but there was none" (Ps. 68, 21), "and for one that would comfort Me and I found none." Once when our Lord appeared to St. Margaret Mary, all covered with wounds, He told her that these wounds were inflicted on Him for the most part by souls consecrated in a special manner to His service. What a terrible com-

plaint from the lips of our Divine Bridegroom, Who has the most just claims upon our love and profoundest gratitude! Must I not give my Jesus love for love, heart for heart, sacrifice for sacrifice?

Let us further hear the complaints of our Saviour to St. Margaret Mary: "Behold this Heart that has so loved men and is loved so little in return!" What a depressing truth! How many men are there who do not even know of the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus! How many are there, again, who though they know this love, fail to make some return! And Jesus continues: "The majority offer me in the Sacrament of My Love only ingratitude and contempt." He requests us to be mindful of His complaint that the thought of it may excite us to sympathy and urge us to make reparation for man's ingratitude inasmuch as lies in our power. Could we belong to those hard-hearted souls that remain unmoved on hearing His touching complaints? O Jesus, preserve me from such coldness and indifference! My heart is consecrated to the Lord; it belongs to Him wholly and entirely, since He so frequently visits and sanctifies it in Holy Communion. I have immolated it to Him, at my profession, forever. And still,—with confusion I admit it,—I have requited the infinite love of His Sacred Heart with ingratitude. But, henceforth, it shall be different, O my Saviour. With Thy grace I resolve never more to cause pain to Thy Sacred Heart, but to console Thee by my love.

Second Point

THE CROWN OF THORNS INDICATES THE GLORY THAT JESUS HAS ACHIEVED BY HIS PASSION

As King of Martyrs, our Divine Saviour willed to wear the crown of thorns here on earth and endure an

excess of interior and exterior sufferings. He was inundated in an ocean of bitterness, contempt, and sufferings, because the Father had laden Him with the misdeeds of all mankind, and He immolated Himself to the outraged Majesty of God as Victim of propitiation. The immeasurable sufferings through which He redeemed mankind were for the God-Man the source of an all-surpassing glory. For the crown of derision, He merited the resplendent crown of glory; for the blasphemies of His enemies, the adoration of the saints and angels; for His death on the cross, the eternal reign in His heavenly kingdom. With St. Paul let us look on Jesus, the "Author and finisher of faith, Who having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb.12, 2). For us, too, there is a crown of eternal glory. All depends upon our making the proper use of the fleeting moments of this short time of probation.

Let us often consider the brevity of this life, and of even the longest life, in comparison with eternity. Let us be mindful of the assurance that for every humiliation lovingly borne, for every suffering endured patiently, an increase of heavenly bliss will be our portion. Let us, therefore, desire no other crown in this life than the thorny crown of our Saviour, which is the joy and honor, even in this world, of those who have chosen Jesus to be the King of their hearts, and which entitles them to share in His eternal crown of victory.

Affections: O my God, give me grace to detach my heart more and more from the goods of this earth, and direct them to my eternal home, where I shall possess and enjoy Thee, Who dost constitute all my bliss and delight. Give me patience to bear all the sufferings of

this life for love of Thee, in union with Thee, and for Thy honor and glorification. Accept the little good that I have done in satisfaction for the ingratitude and the insults, wherewith so many grieve and wound Thy loving Heart. Let me value and love sufferings that, having followed Thee on the way of the cross, I may one day receive the crown of glory and praise Thee for all eternity.

Resolution: In the course of this month I will frequently beg Jesus for love of suffering.

Spiritual Bouquet: "He loved me and delivered Himself for me."

Prayer: Open to me Thy Heart, O Jesus . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FIRST FRIDAY OF MARCH

THE LANCE AND THE WOUNDED HEART OF JESUS

"One of the soldiers opened His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water" (John 19, 34).

First Prelude: In spirit see the soldier opening the side of Jesus.

Second Prelude: O my Jesus, give me grace ever better to understand Thy infinite love and to live and die in Thy Sacred Heart.

First Point

THE OPENING OF THE SIDE OF JESUS

About to commend His holy Soul into the hands of the heavenly Father, Jesus willed to shed the last drops of His Precious Blood as a mark of His infinite love; for this reason the spear of the Roman soldier was to

open His side. Love has now reached its climax, and for all times there has been opened an inexhaustible source of graces. Blood and water issued from His Sacred Heart. This life-giving flood of the Blood of Christ flows to us through the mystic channels, the holy Sacraments of the Church. This crimson draught quenches the thirst of the elect; all the saints who surround the throne of God have cleansed their garments in the Blood of the Lamb. But water issued, likewise, from the side of Jesus, from the Sacred Heart, that living water of which Jesus said: "He that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst forever" (John 4, 13). This water refreshes His faithful servants on the thorny paths of life. O Jesus, our King and Lord, Bridegroom of our souls, give us to drink of that living water of grace, that we may thirst for Thee alone and desire naught else.

In this mystic opening of His side, Jesus teaches us still another lesson: that we should be generous toward Him, as He has been toward us, when He offered the last drop of His Blood for us. Furthermore, we should seek in the pierced Heart of Jesus strength in weakness, consolation in every sorrow, light in doubt and pardon for sin. Finally, we should cherish an unbounded confidence in Divine Providence, for God knows how to draw good from evil, and transform bitterness into sweetness, pain into joy, humiliations into triumph. These thoughts will be our support in hours of discouragement and trial.

Second Point

THE FLAMES OF LOVE OF THE PIERCED HEART

"I am come to cast fire upon the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled!" (L. 12, 49). Thus our Divine Saviour addresses us from the height of the cross. From

His wounded Heart broke forth the fire of that love which should enkindle the hearts of all men,—the hearts of apostles and confessors, of virgins and martyrs. O my soul, fix thine eyes upon the most Sacred Heart of Jesus and contemplate the fiery ardor that seeks an outlet through the gaping wound with that impetuosity of love that knows no bounds. It is a furnace of love that desires to overpower my poor, cold heart in order to cleanse it from all stains and set it aglow with the fire of its love. This love wishes to burn in my heart as often as I have the happiness of receiving the most Sacred Body of my Saviour in Holy Communion. Could it be possible for me to approach this furnace of love without being seized by its flames? "If I cannot be so inflamed with the fire of divine love as the seraphim and cherubim," says Thomas à Kempis, "I will at least strive for ardent devotion and prepare my heart so that when receiving this life-giving Sacrament, I may at least feel a spark of that divine fire." As the lance of the Roman soldier pierced the Heart of Jesus, so can we open the life-giving spring of this Divine Fount for ourselves and others, by humble confidence. In this way we do violence to the loving Heart of Jesus and constrain Him, as it were, to impart to our soul the treasures of His love. By humility we draw down a look of mercy from Him "Who exalteth the humble and filleth the hungry with good things" (Luke 1, 52).

Do I place all my confidence in the Sacred Heart of Jesus?

Affections: O my Saviour, I thank Thee for having suffered Thy Sacred Heart to be pierced by the spear, to open a new source of grace and blessing for us, a place of refuge where we are secure against the assaults of the

evil one. O sweetest Heart of my Jesus, Thou knowest my weakness and my misery; I take refuge to Thee with unbounded confidence. Open Thy loving Heart to me also; let me enter that I may dwell therein and be protected from my enemies. In the most intimate union with Thee, I shall be able to die to self, to live, henceforth, only for Thee and the glorification of Thy Sacred Heart.

Resolution: In all our needs we will have recourse to the Sacred Heart of Jesus with the utmost confidence.

Spiritual Bouquet: "With an everlasting love have I loved Thee, and out of mercy drawn Thee towards Me."

Prayer: Open to me Thy Heart, O Jesus . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FIRST FRIDAY OF APRIL

THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS AND THE SYMBOLS BY WHICH IT IS REPRESENTED

"Behold this Heart that has so loved men" (Words of our Lord to St. Margaret Mary).

First Prelude: Represent to yourself the Sacred Heart as our Lord Himself revealed It to St. Margaret Mary. It is wounded, entwined with a crown of thorns, and enveloped by flames.

Second Prelude: O loving Heart of my Saviour, give me the grace to derive great profit from the contemplation of these symbols.

First Point

THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS IS A LIVING HEART

The Sacred Heart of Jesus is a truly living Heart of flesh and blood, inseparably united with the Incarnate

Word of God, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, infinitely holy and adorable. It is the masterpiece of the Holy Ghost, the source of all graces, the origin of all good, of the noblest and sublimest sentiments, a furnace of love. The love of this Heart lifts us up to God so that we may share in all His treasures, and It condescends to our misery, to suffer and struggle with us. In His great love, Jesus has given this Heart to me that I may form mine in imitation of His. But in return He asks my heart. How touching is His plea: "My child, give Me thy heart!" (Prov. 23, 26). I have given it to Him, immolated it wholly to Him on the solemn day on which He called me into His holy service and received me among His spouses. With this surrender I assumed the sacred duty of living for Him alone, of promoting His honor. That His grace may be fruitful, and His divine life developed in me, I must renounce every voluntary sin, even the smallest, and remove from my heart every attachment to it, for no one can serve two masters. Affection for sin and love of Jesus, Who is infinite Purity, can never be united. If, however, we are anxious to comply with the desires and petitions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we must cleanse our heart of all inordinate leaning toward creatures and the things of this earth, and most of all, strip it of all ill-regulated love of self. Only then shall we be able to be most intimately united with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to be actively engaged in promoting His honor and glory and the salvation of souls.

How am I disposed in this regard? Am I the slave of inordinate attachments to voluntary faults? Do I refuse God a sacrifice? Is it my aim to imbue others with love of, and confidence in, the Sacred Heart of Jesus?

Second Point

THE SYMBOLS THAT SURROUNDED THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

They are the rays, the flames, the thorns and the cross. These symbols suggest the effects of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This devotion illumines the mind that it may understand the sublime and exalted truths of our holy religion, and, in some measure, comprehend the greatness, the beauty and amiability of the Heart of the God-Man. It excites our will to be more active in putting into execution what the understanding recognizes as good, desirable, and pleasing to God. The flames that emanate from the Sacred Heart remind us of the words: "I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled" (Luke 1, 49)? Finally, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus urges us to follow our Divine Saviour in His passion, and willingly to suffer the thorns of affliction to pierce our hearts. This Heart is further surmounted by a cross to remind us that the cross is the mark of true devotion to the Sacred Heart. Those who would love Jesus truly must love the cross. The open wound tells us that the Heart of Jesus is always our secure refuge in sufferings and tribulations, our true home and sweetest repose in life and in death.

Is the Sacred Heart of Jesus also my sweetest resting place, and do I draw from this inexhaustible fount of graces with the confidence that love of this adorable Heart must inspire?

Affections: O Divine Heart of my Saviour, I adore Thee and offer Thee, with all my heart, the homage of my humility. To Thee I consecrate myself anew with all the powers of my soul, and beseech Thee let me show

forth the works of a true disciple of Thy Sacred Heart. Illumine my understanding that I may ever better realize Thy beauty, increase my love of this most affable Heart and incite my will to follow Thee on the way of the cross that I may become more and more like to Thee. Let me often address to Thee the words of St. Ignatius: "Teach me, O Lord, to know Thee, that knowing Thee, I may love Thee, and that loving Thee, I may imitate Thee."

Resolution: I will accept every cross at the hand of God and unite my sufferings with the sufferings of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Spiritual Bouquet: "To suffer or to die."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

MEDITATION FOR THE FIRST FRIDAY OF MAY

COMPLETE ABANDONMENT TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

"In Thee, O Lord, I have hoped; let me never be confounded" (Te Deum).

First Prelude: In spirit behold St. Margaret Mary, consecrating herself to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Second Prelude: O sweetest Jesus, give me grace to immolate myself to Thy Sacred Heart without reserve.

First Point

THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS IMMOLATION

Complete immolation consists in surrender of ourselves, with body and soul, for time and for eternity, to

the love and care of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Oh, how happy are those who in this manner abandon themselves to the Sacred Heart! No evil can befall them, for they are under the immediate protection of the omnipotent God, Who can transform every evil into a remedy and a blessing. Nothing can happen to such souls contrary to their will, for they wish and desire naught save God and the accomplishment of His most holy Will. No enemy can harm them, for the powerful hand of God is their defense. How securely they sail on the troublesome sea of life! As of yore the disciples were secure in the little skiff on the Sea of Galilee, under the watchful eye of Jesus, though the waves towered high above their frail bark, threatening to engulf it, so the souls that place all their confidence in God and surrender themselves completely to Him rest securely in the mighty and loving arms of Divine Providence. How ardently the Lord loves such souls! He anticipates all their wants, hears their prayers, shares in their sorrows, comforts them in sufferings, guides them in all doubts, preserves them in danger, helps them in all undertakings, and often quite unexpectedly directs them to a happy issue.

Finally, however, Jesus assists the soul to steer safely, despite all obstacles and dangers, into the haven of everlasting rest. Who hath ever trusted in the Lord and been confounded? This surrender is the best proof of our firm confidence in the love of the Sacred Heart, and, therefore, especially pleasing to Jesus; it is, furthermore, a test of our faith in the Wisdom and Omnipotence of the Divine Heart of Jesus, Who regulates all things for our best interests and His greater honor. This complete abandonment is also a source of untold peace, for what should disturb a soul that rests in the arms of its

Saviour? It is, at the same time, a lasting bond of union between the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the soul.

Do I possess this spirit of perfect abandonment to the Heart of Him Who is "patient and rich in mercy"?

Second Point

IN WHAT MANNER SHOULD WE PRACTICE PERFECT ABANDONMENT?

Perfect abandonment to the Sacred Heart, a source of peace for us, and the securest and easiest way to perfection, should be, as it were, the life-giving principle of a spouse of Christ. Have we not consecrated ourselves with heart and soul to our heavenly Bridegroom and immolated our entire being with all our faculties and tendencies? Would it not be tantamount to committing a robbery of the sacrifice, if we would hesitate to entrust ourselves confidingly to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, with the firmest conviction that He will guide and direct all things to the best issue, namely, our salvation and the greater honor and glory of God? In Holy Scripture we find many examples of this unconditional surrender to God, which show us how it is to be practiced. Consider Abraham, the father of the faithful, who in obedience to the command of God, prepares to immolate the child of promise, the beloved son given him in his old age, the child upon whose head rested the divine promises, and in whom all nations should be blessed. But God has spoken, and Abraham surrenders himself entirely to His holy Will, relying upon God to fulfill His promise in a way incomprehensible to him. And how does God reward his obedience? He sends His angel, who holds back the arm which was raised to deal the death-blow, restores his son, and confirms the promises made to Abraham and his posterity.

Should we not, with like confidence and a joyful spirit of immolation, abandon ourselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Who has given us more proofs of His love than Abraham had received? Therefore, let it be our endeavor, at all times and in all things, to abandon ourselves to Him. Should God demand of us the greatest and most heroic sacrifice, we may trust that He will not refuse us the necessary grace and strength thereto. If doubts perplex us, and if in our souls the anxious question arises: Shall I be saved or shall I be lost? Am I a friend of God? Am I making progress in spiritual life, or am I going backward? Let us not hesitate nor grieve and worry, but from the bottom of our hearts plead: "O most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I trust in Thee! From my wickedness I fear all things, but from Thy love I hope for all things; to Thee I am resigned in life and in death."

Affections: O Jesus, infinitely loving, enlightened by Thy grace, I have understood how pleasing to Thee and beneficial to myself is this complete surrender of my entire being to Thy Sacred Heart. Could I hesitate one moment longer to immolate myself to Thee? Behold, here I am,—Thine forever. To Thee I resign my miserable body; into Thy hands I commend, without reserve, my immortal soul. Though my spiritual poverty is immeasurable and my misery great, yet my confidence in Thee is still greater. It surpasses my weakness; it is greater than all difficulties and more powerful than death.

Resolution: I will frequently renew the complete abandonment of my entire being to the Sacred Heart.

Spiritual Bouquet: "In Thee, O Lord, I have hoped; let me never be confounded."

Prayer: Take, O Lord . . .

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